Lost in Translation:
USAID assistance to democracy building in post-communist Ukraine

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USAID assistance to democracy building in post-communist Ukraine

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Kateryna Pishchikova

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Promotiecommissie:

Promotor:	Prof. dr. M.A. Hajer
Co-promotor:	Dr. A. Freyberg-Inan
Overige leden:	Prof. dr. B.J.M. Arts Dr. A.W.M. Gerrits Prof. dr. F. Gouda Prof. dr. D. Janow Prof. dr. G.C.A. Junne

Faculteit der Maatschappij- en Gedragswetenschappen

To my parents

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Kateryna Pishchikova
Amsterdam, October 2006

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about many fascinating developments in the former socialist republics. Sudden change in all spheres of life was accompanied by an information avalanche. New and old ideas and concepts, works of art and ways of living were either rediscovered from within – as, for example, alternative (*samizdat*[1]) literature and films – or brought in from the outside. Everywhere new initiatives and arrangements were coming up that had previously been unthinkable, from new schools with alternative or more advanced teaching programs to new criminal networks, from new television programs to new consumer products. Along came also a new language that was to give names, at times clumsy or misplaced, to the new reality.

My attention was attracted by so called "public organizations" (*obshchestvennie organizatsii*) that had appeared in great numbers since the end of communism. Organizations of this name existed also before 1991; they were formal branches of the Communist Party that dealt with particular social concerns, such as youth or women's issues. However, the "public organizations" of the 1990s seemed different. In some cases, new offices were being rented, equipment installed, and working conditions were more luxurious than what other public or private organizations could afford at the time. In other cases, the organizations consisted of no more than a phone, a fax, and an Internet connection in somebody's living room. Whatever the practical arrangement, the purposes and the activities of these "public organizations" remained unclear to an outsider's eye. In fact, neither their activities nor their sources of income were "public" - a kind of secretive veil was draped around the new world of these organizations. The people working in these organizations were often perceived as a new type of entrepreneur – those who know how to get "grants" to pay their own salaries.

References to "grants, funds, and projects" evoked a language that was both technically specific and mystifying because its real-world referents remained elusive. I started to explore some questions that seemed evident but, surprisingly, had not been raised before: Why do these organizations have to register as "public organizations"; what are those "grants"

[1] *Samizdat* is a Russian word for "self-published"; it is commonly used to refer to informal home-made publications of writers and essayists who were banned from being published in official state controlled publishing houses during socialism.

they receive; how are they different from salaries or profit; who grants them and for what? Knowledge of English vocabulary was important for understanding the answers I received. However, those answers raised new questions. It turned out that the correct name of "public organizations" was "non-governmental organizations" or NGOs, that they had to be supported in the name of "civil society", and that "grants" were a part of the "assistance" that Ukraine was receiving to an unprecedented extent from various "donors" after it became officially independent in 1991. I was discovering a whole new world, in which the enchantment with the concept of "civil society" was as striking as the skepticism towards "public organizations" that I encountered in Ukraine.

The "projects" and "grants" given to Ukrainian organizations were described by the donors as the most effective means to facilitate democracy in Ukraine, to ensure that the democratic change would be truly encompassing and long-lasting, and to make Ukrainian people more democratically minded. In Ukraine, however, these initiatives were mostly perceived as a peculiar money flow that was going to a small group of people on obscure terms. They were believed to be short-term, insufficient, and ineffective. The two sides of the story clearly did not match, and yet both foreign donors and "public organizations"/ NGOs were speaking about the same "projects" and accountable for the same money. The discrepancy was so obvious that both sides must have been aware of it as well. It is at this point that I found the main puzzle of this dissertation: are the donors blind or do they just not care; are the locals wicked or just plain stupid; and how is it that both sides continue to do what they are doing? What are the mechanisms that enable the meaningful functioning of a civil society assistance discourse in Ukraine?

I tackle these questions by making a detailed inquiry into a particular type of NGO activity. I have analyzed assistance to women's NGOs in Ukraine by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) delivered in the period from 1992 to 2005. In addition to the relevance of prior personal knowledge, the choice of the donor and the recipient in this research is based on their perceived mutual importance. Since the main focus of this study is on how exactly assistance matters for both the donor and the recipient, and on the meanings that are constructed through assistance, it is useful to choose a case in which the mutual importance of assistance is widely recognized. Taking this as a starting point, I have looked into how exactly this importance is (re)created by all sides involved in the interaction over assistance.

Ukraine is one of the largest recipients of American assistance, whose significance for the USA has been stated on many occasions. In the 1990s the USAID program in Ukraine was the third largest in the Agency after Egypt and Israel, and it remains one of the key recipients of American assistance today. Ukraine is also an example of a country that is being reinvented as a sovereign entity, and its relations with the USA are in the making. These relations are particularly important for the US due to its position between Russia and the EU, bordering on the NATO states and being an aspiring NATO candidate itself.

USAID is different from other foreign donors in several respects. It is a governmental agency whose vision and policy are explicitly connected to American foreign policy and security interests. This means that, first, its primary goal is to sustain the national interests of the United States, whose role in world politics is fairly distinct and at times controversial compared to other states; second, it faces many more practical constraints in terms of accountability and programming than other donors, such as private foundations or (international) non-governmental organizations ((I)NGOs). In fact, some practitioners argue that these features of the US governmental assistance set it aside from other assistance efforts and limit the more general applicability of findings and recommendations developed about it. Such a remark would have been difficult to argue with, had the world of international assistance not been showing evidence to the contrary. Notwithstanding one's commonsensical expectation of what different political actors stand for, within the span of little more than a decade it has become increasingly difficult to tell the mission statement of Novib/ Oxfam International from that of USAID or the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and, in some parts, even from that of the Royal Dutch Shell). This dissertation therefore, aims at eliciting those core points of "assistance rationale" that make assistance a significant political process rather than just a set of programs implemented by a particular organization.

An observer may argue that a dedicated NGO means something different by civil society than a big multinational does. Another way to make this objection is to say that it does not really matter what an organization says as long as it does "the right thing". The ambition of this dissertation is to show exactly the opposite. I argue that the discursive dimension of assistance is of as much political consequence as the material one and that by sharing the discourse different kinds of organizations also share the field of political possibilities that they create.

My starting point is that, just like practices, discourses are contextual – they do not exist in some kind of abstract world of ideas but only during particular moments, when they are enacted by certain actors in a certain setting. The assistance discourse does not exist just in the head of the USAID Assistance Administrator; it is (re)enacted in the daily operations of USAID, it is further taken up by various assistance partners, and it travels even further to the assistance implementers and recipients. This means that different actors interact in particular sites and in the process construct the meaning of assistance. For the purposes of the present research I identify three core sites of interaction in this assistance chain: the USAID headquarters in Washington DC; different mediating organizations in Kiev; and local NGOs that receive assistance. I inquire into the discursive processes that take place within each site of interaction as well as across these sites over the given period of time. This logic of inquiry structures the dissertation as a whole.

The remainder of chapter one is dedicated to an overview of theoretical ideas about civil society and assistance. In section 1.2, I look into normative and theoretical reinventions of the civil society concept at three related sites of knowledge production: theories that were developed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; ideas about civil society that

emerged in Western Europe and North America; and, in a separate subsection, theories that strive to conceptualize a new space for civil society that would transcend the boundaries of sovereign states – transnational or global civil society. This discussion makes clear that different theoretical ideas are embedded in particular circumstances of knowledge production and have to be examined within their respective contexts. This implies that different thinkers who work with the concept of civil society do not necessarily mean the same thing by it. In section 1.3., I turn to more applied theories of civil society, especially to the mobilization of the term within the field of democratization assistance. I show that applied theories of how to enhance democracy and the role of civil society therein are dominated by the so-called "transition paradigm". According to this paradigm, the future trajectory of post-socialist countries is assumed to be clear and self-evident. Those countries have been seen as being "on the road to democracy", and their political and social life has been analyzed in terms of following or deviating from this path. Such thinking has precluded the posing of questions about the internal coherence of the paradigm itself or its applicability to the relevant context. This discussion shows how ideas are not neutral but can translate almost directly into political projects that have an impact on political and socio-economic developments in particular countries.

In chapter two of this dissertation I explore civil society as an empirical phenomenon rather than a theoretical concept: I look into different forms of civic activism in Ukraine both before and after 1989. Although it is important to acknowledge the different theoretical levels on which the notion of civil society operates, it is even more important to acknowledge their interrelated and mutually dependent character. This means that political uses of the civil society concept often drive theoretical conceptualizations, and vice versa - normative ideals are translated into political tools. Chapter three is dedicated to clarifying the methodological standpoint of this dissertation and positioning it vis-à-vis other approaches. I show how both the theoretical and the empirical puzzles discussed in the previous two chapters can be clarified by applying dialogical discourse analysis as based on the writings of the Russian/ Soviet thinker Mikhail Bakhtin. I also discuss the particular toolkit that I use for my analysis.

Chapters four to six contain my case study analysis, they each deal with one of the sites of interaction: Washington DC, Kiev, and local NGOs, respectively. The case study is based on material I collected during four fieldwork trips to each of these sites as well as on other primary material that I could gather through on-line research. Altogether I have spent seven months in Ukraine. I initially studied civil society assistance in general and collected a very diverse set of data relating to activities of different donors and trajectories of different civic organizations in Ukraine. Although I soon made the choice to focus on the specific case of USAID assistance to women's NGOs, this data provided for a solid contextualization of my case study in the bigger picture of civil society assistance to Ukraine. During my fieldtrips to Ukraine I also aimed at collecting data outside of the capital and, whenever possible, from different regions in the country.

My five-week field trip to Washington DC was focused specifically on US governmental assistance; I collected primary documents and interviewed civil servants, experts, and consultants at USAID, the State Department, and other organizations that act as assistance subcontractors. The full list of interviews is provided in appendix I. The quotations from interviews that are provided throughout this dissertation were selected as the most illustrative "on-the-record" statements. However, my understanding and interpretation of the complex world of assistance would have been severely hampered without the many more "off-the-record" interviews and informal exchanges I conducted throughout the whole project period. My core documentary sources include strategy papers, intermediary and final reports, requests for applications (RFA), assessments, evaluations, and fact sheets by the donors, as well as various project descriptions and publications by the NGOs. As a rule, the donors have been much more willing to share their printed materials. Unfortunately, many smaller NGOs in Ukraine proved less prolific when it came to paper work, and in many cases also less accessible for interviews. The interactions at the local NGO level have therefore been reconstructed on the basis of more fragmented data and by drawing more on informal exchanges.

All this data was analyzed with the help of Bakhtinian dialogical discourse analysis by identifying the core notions that sustain the civil society assistance discourse and define its meaning. Importantly, I do not see the civil society assistance discourse as a discourse of a particular actor, instead, I look into how it is (re)enacted by a variety of actors in each site of interaction. Chapters four to six are dedicated to the three core sites of interaction – Washington DC, Kiev, and local NGOs – respectively. In chapter seven I make a comparison between these three sites and discuss the stability and the transformations of the civil society assistance discourse across these three sites. These chapters are structured according to three questions, starting from the most general to the most specific: the meanings of assistance, the meanings of promoting civil society through assistance, and the meanings of empowering women (through civil society and through assistance).

1.2. Civil Society: Contextualizing the Rediscovery

As many other politically prominent notions, the concept of civil society has to be understood in the particular context of its (re)emergence. Both its normative and empirical contents developed as a response to particular historical circumstances; even a cursory look at the history of the concept in Western societies reveals a whole of range of competing visions of why it is important to develop a civil society and what forms it should take.[2] This debate is complicated even further by the recent attention to alternative, non-Western conceptions of

[2] Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Michael W. Foley, eds., *The Civil Society Reader* (Hanover and London: Tufts University, University Press of New England, 2003), Adam Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

civil society.[3] Over the past few decades, there has been a growing interest in the concept of civil society among otherwise very different actors. The varied uses of the concept of civil society in recent debates are documented in a classification offered by Adam Seligman. He suggests that, firstly, civil society is widely used as a political tool, "a slogan", by various social movements and parties, among which Eastern European social movements are prominent examples. Secondly, civil society is used as an empirical term or a variable to describe and explain social phenomena and the performance of political institutions. This second use is often connected to broader debates on democracy and citizenship. Thirdly, civil society figures as a normative concept, "a normative ideal, a vision of the social order that is not only descriptive, but prescriptive, providing us with a vision of the good life."[4] Civil society is thus both a normative and a descriptive notion, and the structure of the theoretical and empirical discussions presented in this dissertation reflects this duality of the concept.

However, neither a normative nor a descriptive empirical understanding of the notion of civil society is possible outside of the particular context in which it is created and sustained. The goal of this dissertation is to provide such situated understanding of the concept of civil society in the context of (post-)Cold War East-West dialogue in order to comprehend social and political effects that the concept of civil society and its use have created in the former Soviet countries. Therefore, I am primarily interested in three particular historical contexts: the reinvention of civil society during the late socialism of the 1970s and 80s in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the rise in popularity of civil society theories in Western Europe and North America over the same period, and the recent development of theories of "global" or "transnational" civil society that position civil society beyond the borders of a particular state (or group of states). By confronting these three theoretical realms with each other I illustrate the diversity in civil society thinking as well as disparities in understanding seemingly similar notions that exist between these different sites.

My argument for acknowledging the situatedness of knowledge, however, should not be mistaken for an attempt to reinforce the existing political and cognitive maps. Quite to the contrary, I show in this dissertation that it is the interaction between the different sites/regions that is essential to political processes. This leads me to conclude that, even though it is possible and important to have a dialogue about the nature and purpose of civil society, it is futile and at times even dangerous to assume that such a dialogue can be conducted on the basis of one shared universal idea(l).

As a response to the new conditions of the post-Cold War era, a number of scholars working on the so-called post-socialist region plead for a questioning if not abandonment of regionalist theoretical and cognitive maps.[5] The political and theoretical implications of the unreflective reproduction of conceptual geographies have been highlighted by many scholars

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[3] Simone Chambers and W. Kimlicka, eds., *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002).
[4] Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society*, p.201.
[5] See, for example, Chris M. Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London: Routledge, 2002), Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, And What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

who study the "region" from different disciplinary backgrounds. As Stephen Sampson notes, "the study of Eastern European societies has been plagued by our adherence to concepts", such as "postsocialism", "postcommunism", and "transition".[6] Due to their vagueness, such concepts allow one to maintain the structures that are – or are assumed to be – well known and to draw on the conceptual apparatus of well established subdisciplines. However, the usefulness of such terms can be quite limited in that they are based on a traditional dichotomization consolidated during the Cold War. They imply a certain degree of stability and uniformity of the region and the processes of change that take place across these countries, and they juxtapose the entire region too strongly to the western "other".

Keeping apart the analytical framework for analysis of the region and these empirically observable discursive constructions is a way to enlarge the scope and the impact of studies of current developments in the region as well as of historical analyses of socialism as experienced by these countries. This would entail placing the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union within a broader political geography and posing new comparative questions. To date much of the work that has engaged with countries in the region has been framed in terms of distinct transformations from what used to be a formation opposite to the democratic capitalist West towards a new projected order. The latter has mostly been conceptualized in the teleological terms of attaining the more advanced stage believed to be occupied by the West. Here one could refer to a wealth of studies of democratization across different parts of the world[7] and to works focusing on specific issues in democratization, such as gender.[8] Important broad-scope findings notwithstanding, I would argue that scholarship which is cast within such regional oppositions is responsible for analytical blindness towards the issues of translatability and applicability of seemingly identical notions; it also fails to see the interaction among and interrelatedness of region-based constructions.

When accounting for the re-invention of civil society in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union before and after the collapse of communism it is important not to mistake the distinctiveness of the socio-historical circumstances of socialism in those countries with the analytical construction of the "East" as a region distinct from the "West". This opposition was sustained also by the "Eastern" side. As Adam Michnik recalls, one of the wide-spread beliefs in the region was the "utopia of the West".[9] The opposition between East and West is a powerful and politically charged construction, which was not only used to

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[6] Steven Sampson, "Beyond Transition: Rethinking Elite Configurations in the Balkans," in *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia*, ed. Chris Hann (London: Routledge, 2002), 297.

[7] To name just a few: Guiseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), Joan Nelson, ed., *Intricate Links: Democratization and Market Reforms in Latin America and Eastern Europe* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994), Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[8] Jane S. Jaquette and Sharon L. Wolchik, eds., *Women and Democracy: Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), Marilyn Rueschemeyer, ed., *Women In the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E.Sharpe, 1994).

[9] Adam Michnik, "The Rebirth of Civil Society," *'Ideas of 1989' Public Lecture Series at the London School of Economics*, no. 20 October (1999).

maintain the Cold War discourse but also had a formative influence on the discourses of "transition" and democratization after the collapse of communism. The latter remain persistent as new categorizations emerge: "The east-west divide formerly based on 'cold war' has now been replaced by the west's concentrated effort to 'modernize' the east and to 'integrate' the former communist states into European economic, political, and security frameworks."[10] This dissertation aims to further explore the dynamics of such "East-West" interaction and to identify the mechanisms that sustain it.

The need for seeing East and West as mutually constitutive social and political formations is stressed, for example, by Peggy Watson, who issues a plea for "a framework that relativizes Communism and competitive democracy with respect to each other, rather than confining itself to the legacy of Communism as a single and overstretched explanatory variable."[11] Maintaining rigid divisions between the two poles – the East and the West – prevents us from seeing an impressive degree of overlap and mutual influence. In the words of Stephen Sampson, "the West is not just a place 'out there'; it is 'here' among us"; it has become a reality rather than just a representation.[12] This point is also extensively elaborated in the work of Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, who underscore the fact that during the Cold War "the 'East' and the 'West' constituted politically important audiences for each other."[13] This mutually constitutive relationship between "East" and "West" is one of the core assumptions of this dissertation. By employing a dialogical discourse analysis model I further reveal the discursive mechanism that enable such a relationship. In order to understand the interaction, it is important to account for the particular meanings that constitute each of the sides involved in it as well as for the ways in which notions are communicated and meanings are "shared" or contested. In the following three subsections I explore the meanings of civil society as they developed in the "East", in the "West", and in what is understood as a "transnational" framework ("transcending" geographic regions).

1.2.1. Eastern European debates on civil society

The revival and fundamental redefinition of the concept of civil society by intellectuals in Eastern Europe in the 60s, 70s and 80s contributed greatly to the current re-invention of this eighteenth century concept. Although the political importance of events in Eastern Europe of that time is widely acknowledged, the intellectual contribution made here is sometimes questioned. Several Western European thinkers noted in the wake of 'revolutions' in Eastern

[10] Steven Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania," in *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, ed. Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p.121.
[11] Peggy Watson, "Civil Society and the Politics of Difference in Eastern Europe," in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, ed. Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan, and Debra Keates (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p.23.
[12] Sampson, "Beyond Transition: Rethinking Elite Configurations in the Balkans," p.299.
[13] Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.9.

Europe that there were hardly any new ideas developed in the region.[14] Jürgen Habermas spoke of a "total lack of ideas that [were] either innovative or oriented towards the future."[15] All in all, it has been argued that all Eastern Europeans did then was to quote the liberal classics and to mobilize the idea of civil society for political purposes. In some accounts this similarity between ideas from the West and the East was treated as proof of the irrefutability of one universal concept of civil society, to which every free individual must aspire; here Ernest Gellner's work is a telling example.[16] However, others have argued that, given the situated nature of any knowledge production, Eastern European ideas about civil society do not replicate but rather represent a unique synthesis of radical and liberal agendas; they are also argued to have had a formative influence on the wider radical debate on democracy.[17] In the discussion that follows I show that due to the specificity of the historical context in which authors like Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron, Vaclav Havel, and Janos Kis - to name just a few – wrote, they looked at civil society and its role for democracy from a particular perspective. This made their thinking different from "Western ideas" in interesting ways. I particularly focus on the "individualist" moral ethic developed by many thinkers in the "East" and on the empirical conceptions of civil society as a particular realm that was largely seen as confined to the private sphere and as based on immediate family and friendship relations.

In Eastern Europe theories of civil society mainly strove to re-regulate the relationship between the individual and the state. Given the oppressive (post-) totalitarian nature of the state, these concerns were highly political. The following core notions were at stake: individual freedom, solidarity, and morality. Concern for individual freedom was here different from the individualism of Western liberalism; it was more focused on the freedom to relate to others and to form solidarities based on personal choice rather than on official ideology. A distinction was made between the top-down enforced collectivism and egalitarianism experienced and the desired freedom of individual choice, thus separating the repressive official public sphere from an alternative sphere of freedom.

Some of these theories are closely connected to activities of the Polish independent trade union Solidarity and to lessons learnt from the attempts at democratic opposition in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968, respectively. They signify aspirations to create a successful democratic opposition in the face of crude force used by the Soviet Union to dominate these countries. There is, however, considerable divergence between the experiences and ideas of dissidents and intellectuals in different socialist countries. Whereas much of Adam Michnik's work can be read as a rethinking of strategies and tactics for Solidarity and is highly political in the sense of traditional politics, dissidents from other countries were more preoccupied with developing anti-communist ethics rather than thinking in terms of social and political change. These differences are often overlooked in work that is done on civil society in

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[14] See for example: Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New York: Times Books, 1990), Timothy Garton Ash, *We the People* (London: Granta Books, 1990).
[15] Quoted in Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).
[16] Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994).
[17] Gideon Baker, "The Changing Idea of Civil Society: Models From the Polish Democratic Opposition," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3, no. 2 (1998).

Eastern Europe, which is most of the time confined to the study of the Solidarity movement in Poland and the charismatic signatories of Charter 77 in the former Czechoslovakia. Understanding the peculiar nature of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and differences in their trajectories is one of the key steps towards understanding the recent events in those countries before and after the collapse of communism.

The suppression of individuality and the politicization of private life under socialism prompted the appearance of a realm of independent or "parallel" activities, which were perceived as an alternative to official culture and official politics. Interpretations of the content and the social and political implications of these activities varied not only across different socialist countries but also among different groups within a given country. Generally, there seems to be agreement that during socialism a two-fold public sphere existed, which consisted of an official state-controlled public sphere and an alternative public sphere or a "parallel society",[18] as Václav Benda called it.[19] While there is clear unanimity as to the nature of the official state controlled public sphere, there are divergent ideas as to what were the meaning and the aims of the "parallel polis" or "independent society". Most of the time this alternative public sphere was invested with high moral values, as a space for the preservation of "normality" and "authenticity" in the face of the oppressive state and its de-humanizing ideology, which "offers the human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier for them to part with them."[20] The alternative public sphere was defined as harboring "the force of life" and seen as an alternative to the degradation of politics in such regimes.

It was also often conceived of as a realm of morality based on its own ethics, as argued by Jirous: "The essential characteristics of the 'independent society' are kindness, tolerance, respect for the opinions of others, the acceptance of different human beings with love."[21] New forms of communication were believed to be emerging here: "Under the orderly surface of the life of lies, therefore, there slumbers the hidden sphere of life in its real aims, of its hidden openness to truth."[22] The "truth" of the alternative sphere was opposed to the "lies" on which the official public sphere was believed to be building its ideology. This shows that the opposition was created not between the true alternative ideas and the false ideology of the state but between being sincere in one's deeds and thoughts and lying about one's beliefs and intentions. The official public sphere was criticized not because it was based on a false idea but because it was promoting and even enforcing insincerity and hypocrisy about one's ideas.

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[18] There are a variety of labels that were used to denote this sphere, such as "parallel" or "independent society", "underground" or "alternative culture", "counterculture", "second society", and "parallel polis". Empirically, all these labels refer to the same phenomenon of activities outside the official state-controlled public sphere; theoretically, however, they carry different ideas about the character and aims of such activities – a point I elaborate on later in the text.

[19] Václav Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *Social Research* 55, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 1988). Originally presented in a *samizdat* essay *The Parallel Polis* of 1977.

[20] V. Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Keane (Hutchinson, 1985), p.28.

[21] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.227.

[22] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p.41.

Unlike many preceding theories of transformation, change, and even revolution – Marxism-Leninism being the one closest to home – Eastern European theories of the 1970s and 80s were more concerned with means rather than ends. It was believed that, in order to defeat the oppressive state, one has to find ways of acting that are essentially different from those utilized by the state. Having had direct experience with what George Konrad termed "Jacobin-Leninist tradition", many Eastern Europeans argued in favor of a radically different method for change.[23] Not only did Eastern European thinkers of the time reject the idea of a violent revolution but they were also especially cautious about the principles that would inform their own action. The belief was that those would shape the outcomes of action, and that if one wants to reach a "normal", just, and truthful society, one has to adopt those principles from the very beginning, to start "living in truth" right away. Developing different means of action was believed to be a political project in itself. In the words of Jiri Dienstbier, an early spokesman of Charter 77:

> The basic aim of the self-organization of civil society, of independent and parallel activities, is the preservation and renewal of *normality*, as we understand it in the European tradition. This means the renewal of *civic awareness and interest* in the affairs of the community; it means an appeal to the quality of work and decency in human relationships; it means the attempt to maintain and expand awareness of one's legal rights, self-education and assisting in the education of others, writing books, publishing periodicals, putting on plays, holding seminars, exhibitions, concerts etc. And it also means forming judgments, without emotions and with an effort to get as much information from as wide a variety of sources as possible, on various aspects of the domestic and international situations.[24]

In the words of Adam Michnik, Eastern Europeans did not have a revolutionary utopia, for their utopia was "regaining the right to a normal national, civic, religious, economic, and political life."[25]

> It follows from the very essence of these attempts to form an "independent society" that at their core will always be the creation of islands of plurality that may become a prefiguration of a pluralistic society […]; independent activities will probably continue to encourage the elements of pluralism, as well as everything that we have learnt – that is, *tolerance, a revulsion toward ideological thinking and toward all forms of violence*, whether overt or hidden, etc, in order that these qualities may become firmly rooted.[26]

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[23] George Konrad, *Antipolitics: An Essay*, trans. Richard E. Allen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).
[24] Jiri Dienstbier in Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.231.
[25] Michnik, "The Rebirth of Civil Society."
[26] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.225, emphasis added.

Attempts to create an independent sphere completely outside the control of the abusive state were famously captured by the notion of "anti-politics".[27] George Konrad argued that anti-politics should aim not at capturing state power but at pushing the state back from various spheres of life, and in such a way curtailing its powers. This theory aimed at recasting the public sphere rather than retreating into the private. Yet, "anti-politics" in Konrad's formulation is also very much an anti-politician perspective. For him, politicians in control of state power cannot be "improved" because their position and their philosophy of life are inherently violent and self-interested. They have to be accepted as a necessary evil and kept at bay by other, inherently moral intellectual forces that should come from civil society. The two realms, however, are and will always be separate and antagonistic towards each other. In Konrad's words:

> Politicians have to be guarded against because the peculiarity of their function and *mentality* lies in the fact that they are at times capable of pushing the button for atomic war. […] No *thinking person* should want to drive others from positions of political power in order to occupy them himself. I would not want to be a minister in any government whatsoever. […] My worst nightmare is to have to tell millions of people what to do next. The opposition thinker is not a member of any shadow cabinet.[28]

Here the state is equated with people of a particular breed whose "mentality" and nature are inherently different from those of a "thinking person". The latter voluntarily chooses to stay outside of the state and mocks its ambition to "tell millions of people what to do next." "Anti-politics" is not about transforming politics but about expanding the "outside" of politics and keeping that realm free of everything (negative) that is embodied in politics.

There were, however, a few qualifications made to the notion of "anti-politics" in terms of how far one could go in turning one's back towards the state and disregarding it. There seemed to lie a danger in trying to push for disregarding the official politics and everything connected to the state completely. In a clear-cut world of an oppressive system on the one hand and rightful dissidence on the other a potential for dialogue and for a search for new solutions could be lost somewhere along the way. As the former Protestant clergyman and Czech dissident Jan Šimsa put it,

> I think it is dangerous to overload concepts like "independent society". We have to keep in mind all of society, culture, science, all of life in its indivisibility. In a sectarian understanding of independence, I see the danger of depoliticization and the danger of remaining too long in seclusion.[29]

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[27] Konrad, *Antipolitics: An Essay*.
[28] Ibid., p.96-119.
[29] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.245.

To illustrate this point, Šimsa points to the problematic nature of the so-called "kitchen debates"[30] and home education, due to the fact that they were not aimed at educating and sharing information beyond just a closed circle of friends. There was a danger of turning dissident activities into a ghetto rather than facilitating their broader societal impact and potential for change.

The question of how political "anti-politics" could and should be was hotly debated at the time. According to Václav Benda, the parallel polis

> …cannot completely ignore the official social structures and systematically remain separate from them (this is reflected in the more extreme aspects of the ideology of the underground) nor can it merely reject them and be their negative image […]; variety, but not absolute independence, for a parallel course can be maintained only with a certain mutual respect and consideration.[31]

How such coexistence could be endorsed without allowing independent activities to be corrupted by the state was a question of key importance. In this respect, the argument for "putting the society first", as for example discussed by Jiři Dienstbier, seems particularly valuable. The idea of the "self-organization of civil society" is based on the belief that if the state does not perform its functions of responding to social needs, civil society has to self-organize and therefore enter into a dialogue with the state and to contest its totalizing demands for power. "The state is too important a social institution to be understood merely as a parasitical organ that can be gradually pushed out of the life of society."[32]

The ideas that laid a basis for the activities and identities of the Polish movement "Solidarity" and of KOR[33] are the most proactive and explicitly political responses to this dilemma in the whole of Eastern Europe. Building upon the idea of the prevalence of political means versus political ends, some Eastern European thinkers developed the concept of a "self-limiting revolution" that would be aimed not at capturing state power but rather at a peaceful transformation of society towards autonomous self-organization outside of it. This would allow the establishment of a new order in which civil liberties and human rights would be safeguarded. The Polish movement "Solidarity" sought neither to form a political party nor to capture state power. It sought neither the restoration of capitalism nor the withering away of the state. The importance of the concept of the "self-limiting" revolution is that - unlike the classical Marxist understanding of history and revolution as contesting the state on its own ground - it does not aim at the total destruction of a despotic state: "The 'independent society' does not compete for power."[34] After all, such a strategy would put revolutionary forces themselves in the place of uncontested state power and, thus, threaten to undermine citizen

[30] "Kitchen debates" are a peculiar phenomenon in socialism, when people would gather informally at each other's homes to discuss philosophical, ethical or political issues, to read and talk about art and literature excluded from the official "culture".
[31] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.217.
[32] Ibid.: p.230.
[33] *Komitet Obrony Robotników* (Workers' Defense Committee)
[34] Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.227.

self-organization and defense against the despotic state.[35] Indeed, the close knowledge of "vanguardist" top-down change as realized by the Bolsheviks was seen as an example of a revolution that signified a transition from a despotic monarchic state to a despotic proletarian state.

In moving away from radical ideas of revolution and reform while maintaining the emphasis on civic activism, Polish émigré philosopher Leszek Kolakowski argued in favor of a reconstruction of the social sphere through oppositional practices which would create a realm free from state control.[36] This opposition was to be aimed not at influencing the state directly but at addressing an independent public, in order to form a culture of new citizenship based on rights and principles of equality. "Every act of defiance helps us build the framework of democratic socialism, which should not be merely or primarily a legal institutional structure but a real, day to day community of free people."[37] This "society-first" argument was presented as a more viable strategy for creating a counterbalance to the state, in which case the pressure on the state from below would be more of a by-product than an end in itself.[38] Developing such a sphere was believed to provide the necessary safeguards in the face of the oppressive state. "The commonness of revolutionary attitudes among the citizens and the resulting tendency of the citizens to control the authority are sufficient to guarantee that the sphere of regulation does not reach beyond the range of administration."[39]

However, there were divergent views as to the political implications of "parallel" activities, and in fact, even as to their possibility. Recalling events in Poland, George Konrad reports on the mixed feelings that he and his fellow Hungarian intellectuals had. He admits to the perceived impossibility for Hungarians at the time to have something like KOR and to wide-spread doubts about whether the Poles would ever succeed, even though everyone wanted them to.[40] Many intellectuals at the time preferred a more individual and more contained conception of opposition. Some (for example Havel) believed that every individualist act outside of the official public space was in itself an act of political significance since it defied the logic of the regime. Dissidents like Jiří Dienstbier believed that the political impact of creating such a sphere arose from the mere fact of its existence: "What is the meaning of independent activities that openly declare themselves as such? When a citizen proclaims that he will not allow his citizenship to be taken from him, he renews the very notion of citizenship itself."[41] Therefore, much effort was invested by such thinkers into developing and maintaining an individual moral stand rather than into attempts to mobilize the broader public. This view is close to the ideas supported by some Soviet dissidents. For

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[35] Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).
[36] Leszek Kolakowski, "The Fate of Marxim in Eastern Europe," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 9 (1970), Leszek Kolakowski, *Toward a Marxist Humanism: Essays on the Left Today* (New York,: Grove Press, 1968), Leszek Kolakowski and Stuart Hampshire, *The Socialist Idea: A Reappraisal* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).
[37] Adam Michnik, *Letters From Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1985), p.148.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Leszek Nowak, *Power and Civil Society: Toward a Dynamic Theory of Real Socialism* (Westport: Greenwood, 1991), p.64.
[40] Konrad, *Antipolitics: An Essay*.
[41] Jiří Dienstbier in Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.231.

them, what mattered was an individual act of opposing the regime rather than attempts at mobilizing masses or achieving the actual regime change. The latter task, most of the time and, according to some accounts, even in early 1989, seemed virtually unattainable given the perceived stability of the Soviet system.

In the Soviet Union the idea of opposing the regime as an individual in one's private realm rather than as a community in its alternatively constructed sphere was even more pronounced. Dissidents like the famous historian Roy Medvedev were, in his own words, "dissenting against the authorities from a moral point of view. They never developed a goal to be political leaders."[42] The dissidents were very brave intellectuals but not organizers with a political program that would answer the question what should be done once the Soviet Union disappeared. The realm of dissidence in the USSR was not the realm of collective opposition but the realm of critically minded and marginally positioned individuals. In an interview ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union another prominent dissident Larisa Bogaraz explained: "The dissidents weren't representing anyone. We wanted the situation to be just like that. Each dissident could represent himself."[43] In fact, their dissidence was largely based on ignoring the system and is exemplified in a subculture of "janitors and night guards"[44] – people who chose for the utmost marginality in the socialist system for the sake of securing their freedom from the state.[45] Opposition to the state took place first and foremost on the level of ideas or rather on the level of rejecting ideological totalities and through the choice of staying outside of and partly disregarding the state.

These ideas are reflected in a peculiar understanding of the relationship between public and private, in which the public represents the "wrong" kind of politics and the private is seen as a realm of individual freedom. The "parallel society" was private and largely based on familial ties and small circles of friends, whose relations with each other were predicated on high degrees of trust and almost intimacy, due to the potential dangers of even seemingly innocent activities.[46] Reporting on the results of extensive interviews conducted in 1980, Krzysztof Nowak concludes that

> In his private role, an individual was relatively outspoken and could trust […]; the politicized sphere of public life gave rise to the division of the world into the private and the public realm […]; in the private realm people could be frank and "authentic", whereas in the public realm they were forced to obey the alien rules. For them [Nowak's informants] the public world was

[42] *The Russia Project: Whatever Happened to the Soviet Dissidents* (Reese Ehrlich, 2001 [cited April 29, 2004); available from http://www.russiaproject.org/transcripts/dissidents.html.
[43] Ibid.([cited).
[44] Another metaphor that is sometimes used to refer to this phenomenon is the "boiler room" subculture.
[45] For an ethnographic account of this life *vnye* ("outside") see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Princeton University Press, 2005).
[46] As, for example, a legally prosecutable practice of telling jokes (*anekdoty*) in the Soviet Union was a way of expressing mockery and distaste for the official rhetoric of the state. See Alexei Yurchak, "The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretence, and the *Anekdot*," *Public Culture* 9, no. 2 (1997).

> "artificial", a world where you had to pretend things and must not tell the "truth".[47]

According to another account

> […] in authoritarian states *citizens* seldom become *persons* until they are in private, with their families, among friends, at their cottages. As citizens, they are more apt to stylize an appropriate behavior for themselves, maintaining certain rules of behavior that become habitual. There is always tension between *natural*, spontaneous behavior and "*official"* behavior.[48]

What is particularly revealing in this quote is the rigidity of the opposition between the private as "natural" and the public as the "habitual" that is mirrored by another opposition between "persons" and "citizens". This points to a significant belief that one's role as a citizen (which, as Battek argues further, is not chosen freely but imposed by circumstances of one's birth) is not only devoid of creativity and self-expression but is actually inhibiting these human qualities. By implication, individual freedom of expression is only possible in one's private role as a "person". For Rudolf Battek, the private realm offers an alternative – "the spiritual", which he defines as "ethical postulates, sensitive creation, analytical and synthetic processes of learning and self-discovery […], feeling, knowing, giving, learning, loving, [and] believing."[49] This alternative is essentially concerned with the intellectual, creative, and emotional needs of an individual rather than the collective, and it endows the private sphere with a multitude of roles that could otherwise be spread between different realms, such as the church, the educational system, and the family.

Such distrust in the "official" sphere was elegantly described as a so-called "'as if' game" that characterized people's behavior in public. In a much quoted example given by Vaclav Havel in his landmark essay *The Power of the Powerless*, the manager of the fruit and vegetable shop places the slogan "Workers of the World, Unite!" in his shop window. He does so not because he feels truly concerned about the unity of the workers all over the world but because "that poster was delivered [to him] from the enterprise headquarters together with the onions and carrots." The greengrocer sees the slogan as a way to signal his loyalty to the regime and thus, to secure himself. He does not have to be passionate or sincere about it because it is sufficient to behave "as if" he believes it, and the authorities behave "as if" they believe he believes. This mechanisms places individual citizens in the position of being simultaneously accomplices and victims of the regime.[50]

What is significant in this analysis is that it shows how hypocrisy and oppression cultivated in the socialist public sphere were commonly reproduced by the system and its

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[47] Krzysztof Nowak, "Covert Repressiveness and the Stability of a Political System: Poland at the End of the Seventies," *Social Research* 55, no. 1/2 (Spring/Summer 1988): p.184-87.
[48] Rudolf Battek, "Spiritual Values, Independent Initiatives, and Politics," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p.101, emphasis added.
[49] Ibid., p.97.
[50] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," p.27-29.

citizens. The conscious retreat into the private and the explicit disinterest and disdain of the public were feeding into rather than subverting the existing system. Czech academic Miroslav Kusy presents a similar argument:

> People continue to play the game of "as if" and keep their reservations to themselves. They have grown accustomed to the confusion of concepts and the relativity of moral values. Not only that, they have been able to turn this weapon of real-socialist ideology to their own advantage. With its help, they ideologize their own behavior vis-à-vis the regime and justify their way of life within the context of the harsh reality. […] People expect no change in the foreseeable future, and consider any effort to bring about such change as vain and dangerous. Like the regime, the nation becomes offensive about what it already has.[51]

There is a widespread argument that the Soviet regime collapsed so rapidly and irrevocably partly due to the fact that nobody in the society, including the ruling elite, cared for it anymore. The arguments outlined above introduce another way of looking at the apathy, hypocrisy, and disillusionment that characterized late socialism and its citizens. It shows that just "talking the talk" and "playing the game" is not a mask one is free to put on and off retaining a "real" face under it. The "talk" and the "game" are real and constitutive of the identities of the actors involved. In this dissertation I show how an intricate combination of "old" and "new" talks is at work in the more recent "post"-socialist reality.

What was distinct about Eastern European thinking before the end of socialism was an aversion towards grand ideologies. The biggest contribution of those theories could be said to be their consciousness of the methods of resistance and their primacy over the anticipated outcomes. Even the most proactive ideas about civil society maintained the tight connection between the means and the ends, emphasizing that the civil society movement would lose the moment it would start using the same means as the oppressive state. The alternative means, however, were mostly conceptualized in individualistic and private terms.

As this overview of different "Eastern ideas" about the meaning of civil society has shown, there were fewer affinities and uniformities behind the "iron curtain" than is customarily assumed. The wealth of ideas developed in different socialist countries is better understood as a range of thinking than as a coherent East European approach. These divergences are also clearly visible in different post-socialist experiences for different societies. In addition, there is less continuity between the meaning-making and reality before and after 1989 than is often believed. In other words, what seemed a meaningful form of civil society under the socialist regime did not resonate with the realities after its collapse. This points to the need to investigate the meaning of civil society in its particular context and as shaped by cultural and historical dynamics. This dissertation presents such a type of research.

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[51] Miroslav Kusy, "Chartism and 'real socialism'," in *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. John Keane (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p.165-66.

1.2.2. Western theories on civil society

The discussion below illustrates further how, due to different historical contexts, the concept of civil society as well as other important notions such as "trust", "solidarity", and "civility" may carry completely different meanings. More specifically, I focus below on the conception of an individual and its position vis-à-vis the public and the private that developed in the mainstream civil society theories in the "West".[52] Whereas in the "East" an individual was seen as a source of morality and the basis for a normative judgment, in the "West" the discussion defines an individual in negative terms. An individual is (often implicitly) perceived as a source of problems such as apathy, extremist beliefs, rent-seeking, and distrust. The concept of civil society is therefore put forward to counterbalance or mitigate those features and is believed to reside in the collective public realm that goes under a variety of labels, such as the Habermasian "public sphere" or the neo-Tocquevillian associationalism.

Associationalism – despite a variety of labels in different countries[53] – reflects politics of the non-Marxist secular left, especially their belief in civic and political liberties. Empirically, it sees civil society as a "space of uncoerced human association and also as a set of relational networks – formed *for the sake of* family, faith, interest, and ideology – that fill that space."[54] It is therefore implied that familiar or interest-based relations need to be mediated by a collectively constructed sphere. These concerns have been expressed most famously by Jürgen Habermas.[55] According to his analysis, in Western societies the private interest is increasingly occupying the public sphere, and the state relates to its citizens more as to clients or consumers of services. Thus, individuals are developing dependency on the state and lose interest in as well as skills for critical public debate and critical reasoning. These tendencies are reinforced by the professionalization of politics and the marketization of the media. Such developments in supposedly established democracies fall short of the normative ideal of the public sphere and civil society.[56]

This debate is largely predicated on arguments about "civility" as a value imbedded in civil society, which carries the potential to counter the "background of growing disorganization – violence, homelessness, divorce, abandonment, alienation, and addiction"

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[52] For the classification of civil society theories into the mainstream and the alternative see the volume by Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

[53] Such as democratic leftists in Italy, social democrats in Northern and Central Europe, British Laborites, or liberal egalitarians in North America. See Michael Walzer, "Equality and Civil Society," in *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, ed. Simone Chambers and Will Kymlicka (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.33.

[54] Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner, *SUNY series in political theory. Contemporary issues* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), p.153.

[55] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. T. Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989/1962), Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).

[56] For an overview of these tendencies in the US see, for example, the contributions to the volume edited by Theda Skocpol and Moris Fiorina Theda Skocpol and Moris Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Brookings Institution Press, 1999)., especially the concluding chapter by Skocpol.

that is evident in capitalist societies of today.[57] The growth of apathy and individualism and the lack of interest in public affairs are all referred to as worrying tendencies that decrease the democratic quality of affected societies. As I noted above, all of these negative features are implied to be coming from individuals left to their own devices. Therefore, civil society is meant to be a site to cultivate public morality and trust that would become prerequisites to a more democratic society. The relevant virtues are argued to be best learnt in associational networks of citizens, which function as "schools for citizens" in two important respects. Firstly, they teach active engagement and, secondly, - some would say even more importantly – the teach "how to live with the many different forms of social conflict."[58]

One of the most famous strands of this kind of thinking is the one based on a neo-Tocquevillian revival of the study of voluntary associations and of ideas about social capital. It emerged in the 1950s-1970s with the studies on civic culture famously represented by Almond and Verba.[59] These studies provoked much interest in the relationship between interpersonal and social dynamics and the broader political context. They were focusing on questions of group formation and functioning in various countries and on characteristics of interpersonal relations in the public realm, with a specific concern for varying degrees of trust. This variation was seen to translate into political processes in which people are more or less willing to cooperate politically with their fellow-citizens, depending on the "existence of more basic social values – widespread social trust and a high evaluation of considerateness and generosity in people – and … the fact that these permeate the political system."[60]

One of the most influential studies on social capital and associationalism is Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*.[61] Starting with similar assumptions Putnam has taken this argument further by postulating in his research on democracy in Italy that civicness and social trust are necessary preconditions for democracy and development.[62] Although some criticism was leveled at this study on methodological and historical grounds,[63] it became a reference point for civil society research since. An important

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[57] Michael Walzer, ed., *Toward a Global Civil Society*, *International Political Currents* (Providence, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), p.173.Some scholars, however, contested this claim by arguing that civic engagement has been undergoing transformation and reinvention rather than drowning in growing apathy. For example, Pippa Norris argues in her book *Democratic Phoenix* that "there are good reasons to question popular assumptions that civic decline has become pandemic throughout the older democracies, and that it has failed to flourish and take root in the stony and uncertain ground of the newer democracies" Pippa Norris, *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.7.

[58] Walzer, "Equality and Civil Society."However, some scholars have argued that there is no evidence that positive lessons learnt in associational life will always have a spill-over effect in the political realm. See, for example, Nancy Rosenblum, *Membership and Morals: The Personal Uses of Pluralism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[59] Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

[60] Ibid., p.242.

[61] This work is highly indebted to James Coleman's work on social capital. See James Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), James Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. supplement (1988).

[62] Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[63] Simona Piattoni, "Review of Robert Putnam (1993) "Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy"," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (fall) (1995), Sydney Tarrow, "Making Social Science Work Across

addition to the civic culture argument made by Putnam is that what matters for democracy are not only the formal institutions of representative democracy but also the informal institutions, social relations and patterns of trust, in which formal political processes are embedded. On the basis of an extensive study of the impact of the regional reforms introduced in Italy in 1970, he argued that the social capital generated through a variety of informal institutions explains the relative performance of democracies. As Putnam states in the oft-quoted conclusion: "Tocqueville was right. Democratic government is strengthened, not weakened, when it faces a vigorous civil society. […] Building social capital will not be easy, but it is the key to making democracy work."[64] A so-called "Putnam link" – a link between building trust, values, and skills through voluntary association and enhancing democracy – has been considered eye-opening for the study of civil society in both democratizing countries and established democracies.[65]

The weakness of Putnam's argument, however, lies in the fact that, while looking for explanations for differential developments in the north and the south of Italy, he disregards the role of political parties, movements, distinct ideologies, and beliefs in institutional performance and democratic outcomes.[66] He is also, as Syndey Tarrow was one of the first to point out, leaving unexplored the impact of the state on the social capital dynamic.[67] Furthermore, criticizing Putnam many scholars have argued that notwithstanding the contribution of his study on exploring relationships of cooperation and social trust, it fails to demonstrate a causal relationship between civil society as he conceives of it and the success of democracy. Quite on the contrary, it has been argued that a vibrant and robust civil society, if developing alongside weak political institutions, can produce non-democratic effects. For example, Berman shows that the Nazi movement in the Weimar Republic emerged from a vibrant and well-organized civil society.[68] Other, closer to date examples include the rise of extremist groups like the Russian National Unity and the Romanian National Union or the World Church of the Creator and the Nation of Islam.

For Putnam any association or network regardless of its goals and the nature of its political engagement (or lack thereof) makes for a rich associational life; he fails to make a distinction between democratic and non- or even anti-democratic values that may be at the core of these organizations and networks. To quote Amy Gutmann's critique:

> Among its members, the Ku Klux Klan may cultivate solidarity and trust, reduce the incentives for opportunism, and develop some "I's" into a "we's"

Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work," *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (June) (1996).

[64] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, p.182, 85.

[65] Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995), Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

[66] Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, p.48.

[67] Tarrow, "Making Social Science Work Across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work."

[68] Sherry Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997).

> … [but] … the associational premises of these solidaristic ties are hatred, degradation, and denigration of fellow citizens and fellow human beings.[69]

To extend this criticism: Putnam fails to address the challenge of "bad civil society".[70] Without the intention of completely dismissing civil society, "bad civil society" is a cautionary tale that helps refine and contextualize ideas about civil society. Drawing on examples from various historical contexts in which voluntary associations actively and publicly challenge the values of civility and reciprocity through the promotion of hate, bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism, and aggressive xenophobia, Chambers and Kopstein argue that - counter to the direct causal link between dense associational life and democracy – such groups present a threat to democracy and democratic values.[71]

When talking of networks of trust and solidarity, it is important to acknowledge that their impact on tolerance and pluralism in society is highly dependent on their composition (are they exclusively white or male or upper class?) as well as on their connections with other networks. That is to say that such networks do not generate democratic values per se: "Knowing that a church-based women's reading group is essentially a bonding experience does not tell you whether they are reading 'The Turner Diaries' or 'The Color Purple'."[72] To address this criticism, Putnam later developed the typology of "bonding" and "bridging" social capital, i.e. social capital based on developing solidarity within a group and social capital developed by connecting across different kinds of groups differentiated by class, race, gender, and so on. Unfortunately, this important extension of his argument still has to find its way into civil society programs that are aimed at building civil society, especially those that are developed in the context of aid/ assistance.

The fallacy of the neo-Tocquevillian revival of associationalism is that its added value is often predicated on a straightforward opposition between civic engagement and individual apathy and isolation, which commonsensically sustains a preference for the former rather than the latter. Importantly, by focusing exclusively on individual values, it disregards the institutional contexts and socio-economic conditions in which associations exist or are expected to exist. It assumes that individuals have equal access to social capital and that the social capital generated within different groups has the same value in the society as a whole. This, however, seems at best naïve given the inequality of groups differentiated by gender, class, or ethnicity.[73] Along similar lines, Chambers and Kopstein argue for bringing back in the socio-economic factors behind the choices that people make and for putting "civil society

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[69] Gutman quoted in Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, "Bad Civil Society," *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001): p.841.
[70] Ibid. See also Moris Fiorina, "Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Moris Fiorina (Brookings Institution Press, 1999).
[71] Chambers and Kopstein, "Bad Civil Society," p.839.
[72] Ibid.: p.842.
[73] Nan Lin, "Inequality in Social Capital," *Contemporary Sociology* 29, no. 6 (Nov.) (2000). See also Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Moris Fiorina (Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

theory back into contact with some traditional issues of social justice."[74] Being much more than a straightforwardly materialist argument about ideas produced by material conditions, this view helps to enhance the discussion about the promotion of democratic values by placing citizens' beliefs and values into a complex context of various factors. "Poverty, downward social mobility, diminished economic expectations, and even basic inequality [defined as a result of changes or threatened changes in life chances] … can create illiberal citizens that no amount of deliberation will convince otherwise."[75] Having problematized the substance of associational life, Chamber and Kopstein argue for the need to conduct context-sensitive comparative studies that would allow mapping out various reasons for which different people join different groups with different effects for democracy.

As the discussion above has shown, under different political, socio-economic, and cultural conditions the relationship between an individual and the public sphere is understood very differently from the ideas that developed in Eastern Europe. The concept is also invested with different normative expectations. Understanding this difference is an indispensable starting point for understanding the dialogue between East and West about the democratic promise of civil society and ways to endorse it.

1.2.3. Global civil society and transnational relations

Over the past few decades a vast body of literature has emerged that strives to conceptualise civil society in transnational or global terms. Research into transnational relations dates back almost three decades; this means it started before the end of the Cold War. In fact, some Eastern European thinkers were incorporating ideas of "globalization" or "global technological civilization" into their writing back in the 80s.[76] This research tradition started off as a debate between the 'state-centered' and the 'society-dominated' view in international relations.[77] Later, for example in a volume edited by Thomas Risse-Kappen, the discussion was picked up and taken a step further to "examine how the inter-state world interacts with the 'society world' of transnational relations."[78] Various contributions to that volume as well as other more recent research have shown that these interactions follow different patterns and lead to different results depending on particular circumstances, such as the type and strength of the state(s) in question, the degree of development of domestic civil societies and their transnational connectedness, and the issue area concerned.

Among the wealth of theories about political globalization and the role of civil society, there are two broad strands that are of particular relevance for this dissertation: the literature

[74] Chambers and Kopstein, "Bad Civil Society," p.839.
[75] Ibid.: p.848.
[76] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless."
[77] Robert O Keohane and Joseph N. Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), Robert O Keohane and Joseph N. Nye, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
[78] Thomas Risse-Kappen, ed., *Bringing Transnational Relations Back in: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.5.

that addresses the theoretical and normative question of a "global ethic" and the literature that explores empirically the "global polity" and the features of global politics.

The "global ethic" literature is primarily concerned with exploring theoretical possibilities for a global democracy. It is largely driven by a normative assumption that "global power *should* be democratized."[79] Under this heading fall the literature on global governance and theories of "cosmopolitan", "normative", and "substantive" democracy, which emphasize the connection between politics and moral purpose and value. Perceived from this perspective, the core task of global/ transnational civil society is the transnational promotion of democracy.[80] It thus places the promotion of democracy and civil society in the context of global changes in economy, politics, and culture.[81]

A central issue raised is whether and how the processes of economic globalization can be complemented with the establishment of a civil society that would reinvent the meaning of democracy on a global scale. Global civil society is seen as important for countering the adverse consequences of economic globalization on social equity across different social segments nationally and between different countries and regions globally. As one of the proponents of this approach has phrased it, "globalization-from-above" by market forces can and should be moderated by the "globalization-from-below" spearheaded by civil society.[82] According to another even more proactive statement, the world needs "a multilevel strategy and program to impose new rules on the global economy while transferring wealth and power to ordinary people – a worldwide economic and political democratization."[83] Such activities are seen as both a counterweight to neo-liberalism, in particular to pressures to privatize and marketize public goods, and a way to achieve greater social equity. Democracy protects and defines individual rights and liberties conceived of comprehensively to include civil, political, economic, and cultural rights; it fosters a degree of social equality; it induces participation in all forms of social governance; it helps identify and inculcate support for the collective good; and it promotes domestic and international peace.[84] Thus, rather than dismissing the processes of economic globalization as destructive, several authors have suggested that it is possible to enjoy the benefits and to mitigate the shortcomings of economic globalization, provided the guiding ideas of globalization are amended to prioritize the protection of public welfare.[85]

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[79] Gideon Baker, "Problems in the Theorization of Global Civil Society," *Political Studies* 50 (2002).

[80] D. Archibugi and David Held, *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), Richard A. Falk, "Global Civil Society and the Democratic Prospect," in *Global Democracy: Key Debates*, ed. Barry Holden (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

[81] For an overview of the globalization debate see David Held and Anthony McGrew, eds., *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[82] Richard A. Falk, "Resisting "Globalization-from-above" through "Globalization-from-below"," *New Political Economy* 2 (1997).

[83] Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization From Below: The Power of Solidarity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2000), xi.

[84] Richard Bellamy and Barry R.J. Jones, "Globalization and Democracy - an Afterword," in *Global Democracy: Key Debates*, ed. Barry Holden (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), Falk, "Global Civil Society and the Democratic Prospect."

[85] Falk, "Global Civil Society and the Democratic Prospect.", P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

Therefore, normative concerns within theories about global civil society also have a practical political side to them. Envisioning an alternative global order is driven by the explicitly formulated goals of achieving social and political equality on a global scale. The following quote from the work of Richard Falk is exemplary of such aspirations:

> To introduce the idea of "normative democracy" is to offer a proposal for a unifying ideology capable of mobilizing and unifying the disparate social forces that constitute global civil society, and to galvanize the political energy that is associated with globalization-from-below […]; thereby reconnecting politics with moral purpose and values [the term] calls attention to the moral emptiness of neoliberalism [and] consumerism.[86]

In addition to growing global inequalities, the new conditions of a "risk society" do not only present a technical challenge but also introduce a new political dynamic. New nuclear, chemical, and other health threats, for example, have a potential to affect everyone, and this interdependence brings about new forms of governance that cross the traditional hierarchies and, ultimately, can lead to a new type of democracy. It is argued along Habermasian lines that the new threats can motivate the creation of a new public sphere defined by an open debate.[87] Global civil society is thus seen as a more suitable arena for mobilization in the face of new risks and environmental threats that affect populations across geographical, social, and political divides.[88]

Some criticisms of these theories are interesting for the purposes of this dissertation. The first criticism questions the universalist nature of the theories of global civil society; the second criticism follows from the first and points to the fact that theories of global civil society contradict the idea of democracy. According to the first criticism, most theories of global civil society fail to question or at least situate the content of the norms and moral values that global civil society is envisioned to uphold. Global civil society is positioned as a shared and equal community. It is believed that civil societies, whatever their point of origin, are essentially the same and are based on the same values and norms.

I contend that these theories would benefit from treating ideas, values, and norms as culturally and historically contingent phenomena whose political dynamic is a worthwhile object of research. To these ends, a large theoretical and methodological apparatus is available from the literature on social constructivism and sociological institutionalism.[89] This literature

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[86] Falk, "Global Civil Society and the Democratic Prospect."
[87] Ulrich Beck, "From Industrial Society to Risk Society: Questions of Survival, Social Structure and Ecological Enlightenment," *Theory, Culture and Society* 9 (1992).
[88] Barry Holden, "Democratic Theory and Global Warming," in *The Ethical Dimensions of Global Change*, ed. Barry Holden (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), Anthony McGrew, "Democracy Beyond Borders?: Globalization and the Reconstruction of Democratic Theory and Politics," in *The Transformation of Democracy?*, ed. Anthony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).
[89] Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999), Martha Finnemore, "Norms, Culture, and World Politics: Insights From Sociology's Institutionalism," *International Organization* 50, no. 2 (1996), Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998).

shows that at the very least, the relevant norms and values should be studied not as a given constant but as variable empirical phenomena defined by particular instances of interaction between the transnational and the domestic. In this dissertation I take up an interpretative-constructivist approach to show how ideas and discourses about civil society acquire new meanings as they travel from one context, for example donor headquarters, to another, such as a local NGO in a small Ukrainian town. Moreover, I show how the interaction between the two different contexts transforms the discourse as a whole, so that the meanings developed in one context influence those in another. I further show that (changing) ideas about civil society constitute particular types of civil society actors.

This brings us to the second criticism: The "global" spread of particular norms and values by civil society actors does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a sign of global democratization. If democracy is about empowering communities to constantly (re-) negotiate normative rules, then universalizing and naturalizing a particular set of norms and values cannot be considered democratic. Danilo Zolo, one of the critics of Held's ideas about global democracy, can be cited here. He criticizes the universalist approach to democratic norms on two counts. First, Zolo argues, it undervalues the complex interaction between normative structures, on the one hand, and cultural and economic processes, on the other; and, second, it reveals an ethnocentric prejudice and shows indifference to non-Western political and juridical traditions. Tony Coates likewise points to the "blind spot which conceals from view the specific cultural origins and particular limitations of cosmopolitan values (their excessive individualism, for example)" and facilitates a kind of imperialism.[90] This critique is a useful reminder of the need to ask whose values and discourses are taken as the basis for the "common" democratic vision and how they might interact with other visions and norms.

In much of the "global civil society" literature, ideas about democracy are usually conflated with the idea of a global civil society. It is assumed that civil society is both the bearer of democratic values and a legitimate crusader that can bring these values to every corner of the world. Most definitions of a "global civil society" reflect these strong democratic aspirations. For example, Mary Kaldor, a well-known proponent of the concept of global civil society, defines it as the "global process through which individuals debate, influence, and negotiate an ongoing social contract or set of contracts with the centers of political or economic authority."[91] Global civil society is also defined as the bearer of alternative visions of a more sustainable, compassionate, and democratic future world order.[92] The claims of morality inherent in the concept of global civil society are further captured in arguments about shifting the centers of power, emancipation, and empowerment of the poor and the marginalized. In the words of Mary Kaldor, civil society is about "political emancipation, empowerment of individuals and extension of democracy."[93]

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[90] Tony Coates, "Neither Cosmopolitanism nor Realism: A Response to Danilo Zolo," in *Global Democracy: Key Debates*, ed. Barry Holden (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), Danilo Zolo, *Cosmopolis. Prospects for World Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).
[91] Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*, p.79.
[92] Richard A. Falk, *On Humane Governance: Toward a New Global Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).
[93] Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*, p.11.

Another strand in the global civil society literature deals with what can be broadly defined as the governance issues of a "global polity". It is based on the core assumption that the political realm is increasingly globalized and that civil society is an essential aspect of this globalization. It shares the normative concern with the "global ethic" approach; however, its focus is more empirical. It aims to explore the various forms that global civil society takes and the various effects it produces. Under this heading fall the diverse and well-developed literatures on global social movements, "epistemic communities", (international) non-governmental organizations (I)NGOs), and transnational advocacy networks.[94]

In this dissertation I focus on a particular segment of this broad phenomenon: non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Foreign assistance to civil society actively engages NGOs both from the "West" and from the "East": The former administer the majority of foreign assistance projects and the latter are the preferred partners in such projects. Moreover, as I discuss extensively in chapters four to seven, often foreign assistance projects are explicitly aimed at creating and supporting local NGOs. I discuss the main features of the dialogue between (transnational) Western NGOs and their local counterparts and the implications it has on the development of local civil society.

It is believed that civil society actors such as NGOs are well-positioned to cooperate across borders and to mobilize more effectively for change.[95] Many authors have worked to conceptualize and measure the political influence of NGOs and to identify conditions under which transnational NGO coalitions are likely to have an impact upon either domestic or international politics.[96] This line of research has been particularly targeted at exploring two aspects: first, the ways in which transnational civil society exercises influence over decision-making in the international arena, for example via environmental or peace movements; second, the successes of transnational coalitions in countering violations by particular governments through the so-called "boomerang effect". The "boomerang effect" is a process through which activists in a particular country link up with their counterparts in other countries through transnational activist networks in order to put pressure on their governments from the outside. This often happens in situations when governments are unresponsive to their civil societies and is characteristic of such issue areas as human rights or the environment.[97]

Civil society is said to have a special empowering quality, since it tends to include stakeholders whose voice is often not heard in "traditional" decision-making: It disrupts old hierarchies and spreads power among more people and groups. This is what Jessica Mathews

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[94] Ann M. Florini, ed., *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), Peter M Haas, *Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination* (University of South Carolina Press, 1997), Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War,* Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), Kathryn Sikkink, "Human Rights, Principled Issue Networks, and Sovereignty in Latin America," *International Organization* 47, no. 3 (1993).

[95] See, for example, the collection of works: Florini, ed., *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society.*

[96] Bas Arts, *The Political Influence of Global NGOs: Case Studies on the Climate and Biodiversity Conventions* (Utrecht: International Books, 1998), Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War,* Richard Price, "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines," *International Organization* 52, no. 3 (1998).

[97] Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics.*

calls the "power shift".[98] Not only are the operations of global civil society more democratic than those of other actors on the global scene, there is also a kind of a spill-over effect that deepens democracy globally and creates new ways in which undemocratic governments or socially irresponsible corporations can be held accountable. Within this framework globalization is believed to offer possibilities of emancipation on a global scale, thus breaking through regional divisions, such as those between North and South. It offers an alternative route for individual citizens to enter into a dialogue with the centers of political and economic power. Mary Kaldor calls this phenomenon the "domestication of the international."[99] Such a perspective can be understood as an actor-based approach that keeps a particular focus on the strategic use of different kinds of resources towards achieving a set of political goals. In other words, the success of civil society lies in its strategic action vis-à-vis (if not against) powerful actors, both state and private.

This strategy is elaborated in detail by Brecher, Costello, and Smith in their book *Globalization from Below*.[100] They call it a "Lilliput Strategy" used by those marginal to the dominant centers of power – even though some social movements and activist groups may be small and powerless, when united by "a sense of solidarity, a common belief system, and a common program" they can exercise substantial leverage.[101] In other words, the power of the powerless lies in their strategic united action towards a just cause. This assumes a certain rigidity in the world order with one global center of power vis-à-vis which the margins are formed, and further, the assumed unity in the center implies unity in the margin. This thinking is captured, for example, in the following quote: "Global capital has usurped powers that rightfully belong to people and to their representatives in government."[102] Without any intention to question the moral principles of those opposing the injustice caused by the global distribution of wealth, my interest here is in the actual mechanisms on which such a new "global polity" is argued to be functioning.

> Globalization from below remains rooted in a wide range of specific movements around specific concerns. But its unifying vision *reframes* these activities in ways that show their connection to the broader problems of globalization experienced by others. It *interprets* particular movements as responses to a *common* situation and as a part of a *common* struggle.[103]

I argue that such "reframing" and "interpretation" are complex political phenomena themselves rather than just strategic moves of no consequence to the phenomena that are being reframed. In the analysis presented in chapters four to seven I inquire whether and how "reframing" and "interpretation" can transform reality and actors' identities in significant ways.

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[98] Jessica T. Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (1997).
[99] Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*, p.78.
[100] Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization From Below: The Power of Solidarity*.
[101] Ibid., p.26.
[102] Ibid., p.40.
[103] Ibid., p.63, emphasis added.

The aspiration to give voice to the "powerless" is one of the cornerstones of the analysis of transnational advocacy networks by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. They show how transnational advocacy networks can mobilize four types of instruments: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. All four are essentially based on mobilizing and strategically employing values and norms. Information politics entails providing "politically usable" information to those who for some reason lack access to it, thus empowering otherwise marginal groups. Symbolic politics is based on mobilizing symbols, actions, or stories that have high legitimacy internationally. Leverage politics means acting in the name of those who cannot call upon powerful actors on their own. Accountability politics means obliging powerful actors to act on principles they have formally endorsed.[104] As all of these politics are exercised, it is believed that the domestic civil society is empowered through its connection to the transnational civil society, not only because of the resources and the leverage it gains vis-à-vis domestic centers of power but also because framing their position in terms of internationally recognized norms helps legitimize civil society actors' claims. One of the prominent examples that have received much scholarly attention is the demise of the Soviet block and the role that different coalitions between dissidents and critically minded groups in the East and civic groups and social movements in the West played in it.[105]

Importantly, the actors who engage in these politics are said to share a quality that sets them apart from those against whom they act, such as, for example, multinational corporations or central governments. Keck and Sikkink define the members of transnational advocacy networks as "principled political entrepreneurs" who act on their conviction and moral principles. According to these authors, this is what makes such actors essentially different. Picking up on this idea, Sperling, Ferree, and Risman introduce the term of "moral entrepreneurs" in their analysis of women's transnational networks. "Moral entrepreneurs" are those who contribute to building organizations and discourses that have moral implications.[106] Altogether the argument is that the moral basis of the discourse and practice of various groups who can be defined as global/ transnational civil society can be seen as a safeguard against some of the ethical challenges and political tensions other actors might face. It is contended that due to this moral basis civil society is less prone to corruption, rent-seeking, and hierarchical and undemocratic practices towards its members, because its members voluntarily choose to act according to their moral principles. While the work of the authors cited above is rich in empirical analysis, further investigation is necessary in order to understand under what

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[104] Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*.

[105] Patricia Chilton, "Mechanics of Change: Social Movements, Transnational Coalitions, and the Transformation Processes in Eastern Europe," in *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-state actors, Domestic Structures, and International Institutions*, ed. Thomas Risse-Kappen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwill, "Understanding Change in International Politics: the Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System.," *International Organization* 48, no. 215-247 (1994), Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structure and the End of the Cold War," *International Organization* 28, no. 2 (1994).

[106] Valerie Sperling, Myra Marx Ferree, and Barbara Risman, "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 26, no. 4 (2001): p.1159.

conditions transnational networks created in the interest of the powerless and of democracy may also subvert rather than enhance the existing inequalities.

This leads to a related question: To what extent can and should norms and values be seen as strategically utilized instruments? Does their instrumentalization not contradict the democratic idea(l) itself? It should be noted that the impact of norms as instruments depends upon the degree to which they are framed and recognized as universally accepted and as an essential and natural component of democratic development. For example, to go back to a case study in the book by Keck and Sikkink, the success of the international campaign on violence against women is attributed to the connection that was established to the norm of human rights.[107] The authors argue that only after the famous "Women's Rights are Human Rights" slogan was created, activist efforts in different parts of the world could be united under that banner and higher international awareness of the issue as well as some legislative change could be attained. In turn, this worked only because the concept of "human rights" had earlier become one of the most central and undisputable international norms.

The fact that constructing common strategic frames can be highly sensitive politically has been powerfully exposed by various women's activists and feminist scholars. Here, as in the "global civil society" literature, the debate can also be seen as two-fold: On the one hand, the theoretical normative component is dedicated to systematizing feminist knowledge and developing and refining theoretical and epistemological issues; on the other hand, the activism-oriented literature is focused on developing analytical and empirical categories that can be utilized towards researching as well as creating women's movements and women's activism. The distinction between the two concerns in feminist literature is not always clear-cut, for it is replete with scholars who reflect upon practical political consequences of certain epistemological positions as well as scholars who discuss theoretical implications of particular empirical findings and activist positions. Without any ambition to go deeply into the complex debates that characterize both literatures as well as the dialogue between them I bring in several points that to my mind usefully illustrate both theoretical and political tensions that can arise around attempts to define a common "global" agenda.

The analysis by Karen Offen offers a very useful historical-theoretical discussion of the meaning of the terms "feminism" and "feminist".[108] The author shows that even a cursory look at the history of women's movements in different cultural contexts reveals conflicting understandings of what it means to act on behalf of women. By citing such examples as German ideas of male/female complementarity and critiques of social institutions or Swedish "motherhood" feminism, she shows that the Anglo-American tradition of equality of rights is only one way of understanding women's issues and women's activism. The general argument is that this diversity has to be considered and theorized if one is to arrive at a meaningful theoretical definition of "feminism". Indeed, the very term "feminism" invokes a host of theoretical and political debates. One of the tensions between feminist political science of the

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[107] Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*.

[108] Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14, no. 1 (Autumn) (1988).

"classical" period of the 70s and its post-feminist turn in the 90s is that between the idea of empowering women as the oppressed and subjugated class, therefore assuming that there is such a distinct group as women that share the condition of oppression, and the idea of gender as a construct, which is constituted by the opposition "male – female", which is reconfigured in a variety of contexts and implicates both the "male" and the "female" part of the opposition. This tension is well captured in the analysis by Barrett and Phillips, who argue that in the 1970s feminists disagreed substantially (and fiercely) over what the cause of women's oppression might be but "did not really question the notion of the cause itself. Nor was there any difficulty with the idea of oppression, which seemed to have self-evident application.[109] Also, for most feminists of the time gender issues were cast in social structural terms; in this sense "feminists united in the importance they attached to establishing the fundamentals of social causation."[110]

One of the critiques of this position came from the so-called "black" feminists, who pointed to the issue of power inequalities between women of different backgrounds, rather than between women and men.[111] According to one of the early critiques, universalizing the category of a woman (on the basis of defining one particular group as a norm) brings to life several axioms that underlie international "gender" policies and perspectives: Women are the same due to the shared fact of their oppression; they are always the victims of male violence, of religious fundamentalism, and of familial code; they are always dependent and have little access to the material and symbolic resources of society. Regardless of the particular historic and cultural meanings of womanhood, women in "other" countries are defined as oppressed, traditionalistic, and legally illiterate.[112] In other words, being defined *by* the Other, objects of international donor activities are inevitably defined *as* the Other.[113]

Other authors have provided historical examples of earlier women's movements to illustrate the problematics of inequality between different women and of the politics of agenda-setting within women's movements. For example, the history of the women's movement in France from the end of the XVIII century onwards, which was torn by class clashes,[114] or the "fallen women campaign" that was led by British upper-class women on behalf of their Indian "sisters".[115] According to a historical analysis by Antoinette Burton, British women were particularly outspoken on the issue of prostitution, in which "Eastern harem slaves"[116] presumably found themselves, and used it to frame the broad discussion of

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[109] Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips, "Introduction," in *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates*, ed. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.2.
[110] Ibid., p.4.
[111] Chandra Tolpade Mohanty, A. Russo, and L. Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991).
[112] Chandra Tolpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30, no. Autumn (1988).
[113] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p.235.
[114] Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
[115] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994).
[116] Ibid., p.184.

women's subjugation. However, their agenda and activities were much more fragmented on the issues that concerned the situation of British women and their disfranchisement at home.

These tensions have been more recently captured in the "sisterhood" – "difference" debate. Some feminists have argued in favor of strategic alliances between women that should be based on the discovery of shared oppression.[117] They have defined "sisterhood" as a political project that would lead to the success of the (global) women's movement. For example, the two volumes edited by Robin Morgan, published some fifteen years apart, both insist on the apparent possibility and success of "sisterhood" as a universal global strategy.[118] This position, however, has been criticized as one that leads to a complete erasure of positional differences between women and sustains hegemonic constructions. Thus, many authors have instead argued in favor of acknowledging "difference" between women.[119] The insistence on the notion of "difference" has raised another question: whether or not it may still be possible to develop a common political agenda. For example, Ann Sisson Runyan provides a useful discussion of whether the plurality of positions denies any possibility for feminist solidarity.[120] Such research, however, remains highly theoretical and, similarly to the discussions about "cosmopolitan" democracy, addresses the normative rather than the practical empirical dimension of the problem.

Related to this dilemma is the issue whether there has to be a (global) women's agenda at all. Should women keep to women-specific issues even if their experience and intuition point to other kinds of issues and concerns? Felly Nkweto Simmonds provides the example of the International Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980. The event was literally split into two between the delegates who were concerned with the Israeli occupation of Palestine and wanted to include in the conference report a call to "eliminate imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, Zionism, racism, and apartheid" and those who rejected such language and were upset that "key political questions of concern to women" were not being sufficiently addressed in the conference.[121] Not surprisingly, those who rejected the call were mostly the delegates from Australia, Canada, the US, and Israel. What is more important for the present discussion, however, is the issue of whether and how the women's movement is capable of responding to different systems of oppression, both local and global, and whether the insistence on "sisterhood" and "women's issues" cannot turn into a straight-jacket for activists who may want to respond to some other issues that are not globally recognized as "questions

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[117] For example, the famous collections by Robin Morgan Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology* (London: Doubleday, 1984), Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Movement* (New York: Vintage, 1970).

[118] Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women's Movement Anthology,* Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Movement.*

[119] For example, Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis, *Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

[120] Anne Sisson Runyan, "World-Traveling Feminisms in an Era of Global Restructuring," in *Partial Truths and the Politics of Community: Feminist Approaches to Social Movements, Community, and Power*, ed. Mary Ann Tetreault and Robin L. Teske (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

[121] Felly Nkweto Simmonds, "Who Are the Sisters? Difference, Feminism, and Friendship," in *Desperately Seeking Sisterhood: Still Challenging and Building*, ed. Magdalene Ann-Lygate, Chris Corrin, and Millsom S. Henry (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997).

of concern to women". This is one of the dimensions of debate that render "global sisterhood" difficult.

These discussions are also of relevance to the general "global civil society" debate. It is noticeable that in most cases the origins of the concept of a "global polity" lie in the "Western" (or "Northern") part of the world, and the question of how to reconcile the "global" and the "local", or rather the different localities marked by differential power positions, remains to be investigated both theoretically and empirically. This dissertation is dedicated to exploring the mechanisms through which this Western-based notion of civil society connects to its local counterparts. By focusing on a particular field of interaction between Western and non-Western NGOs, I aim to shed light on a particular facet of the complex phenomenon of transnational activism. I argue that we will not understand whether global civil society exists and whether it achieves its proclaimed goals unless we look at the mechanisms through which it is constituted.

1.3. Assistance: Theories of Transition and Democratization

The (renewed) interest in civil society in the last decade of the twentieth century has characterized not only academic debates but also policy-making. In particular foreign assistance policies were transformed substantially as a result of the increased importance of ideas about civil society. In this section I explore applied theories on whether and how democracy and civil society can be externally supported that laid the conceptual groundwork for the post-Cold War assistance policies of different countries. Understanding this thinking is important for understanding assistance itself – what set it in motion, what kinds of outcomes it led to, and what effects it created. It is also key for understanding the "lessons learnt" in almost two decades of assistance. Such "lessons" are not only about what has changed as a result of more experience, increasing adjustment, and better evaluation, but also, and even more importantly, about what cannot possibly be "learnt" given particular conceptualization of assistance, its goals, and methods.

1.3.1. Making democracy happen: How and why to assist

Starting off from the recent wave of regime change in different parts of the globe, famously termed the "third wave" of democratization by Samuel Huntington,[122] numerous studies have emerged striving to conceptualize the change towards democratic regimes, "to determine why countries do or do not evolve, consolidate, maintain, lose, and re-establish more or less democratic systems of government",[123] and what makes for the consolidation of democracy.

[122] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
[123] Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), p.7.

These attempts to conceptualize democratization struck a chord with many policy communities, in which a new vogue of promoting democracy worldwide was on the rise. Actors as varied as U.S. and European governments, high-level officials, and other governmental, quasi-governmental, nongovernmental, as well as private organizations and academics were busy exploring the virtues of supporting democratization around the globe. The mobilization of financial resources and technical support towards democratization in policy circles was accompanied by a similarly overwhelming mobilization of attempts to define, predict and analyze the trajectory of democratization, its stages and ultimate goals in academic literature.

This amalgam of ideas about what has to happen after the collapse of a previous totalitarian or authoritarian regime formed the basis for the so-called "transition paradigm".[124] The transition paradigm rests on the key assumption that any country that has been freed from any form of dictatorial rule is moving towards democracy and, thus, presents a case of a democratizing country or a country "in transition to democracy." According to Carothers, "in the first half of the 1990s […] numerous policy makers and aid practitioners reflexively labeled any formerly authoritarian country that was attempting some political liberalization as a 'transitional country'."[125] Transitional countries are perceived as being on a path towards establishing clearly defined democratic institutions and free market economies. They are being described and evaluated on the basis of the degree of progress made along these lines. The assumption is that all it takes is the desire to abandon communist legacies and to embrace new democratic and capitalist ideals.[126] The paradigm postulates a so-called "snowballing" effect amongst democratizing countries, as a result of which countries cannot help but democratize following the examples set by others.[127]

Within this paradigm, there is also a strong belief in "demonstration effects" – the effects produced by the exposure to and exchange with established democracies.[128] Knowledge of democratic principles and practices elsewhere is believed to inspire oppositional elites to pursue democratic change and reform. The assumption here is that Western democracies serve as a standard to which other nations should aspire. Upon closer inspection this line of argumentation is supported only by few and ambivalent examples of formerly colonial states, which are argued to be more successful in their democratic reforms after longer colonial rule because they had more time to embrace liberal and democratic values

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124 A term coined by Thomas Carothers. T. Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 2002.
125 Ibid., p.6.
126 It is precisely for the reasons described below that some authors reject the term "transition" altogether; for example, Barbara Einhorn has argued for the term "transformation" to indicate the departure from western notions of a historical progression from state socialism to liberal democracy. See Barbara Einhorn, "Discussant's Comments," in *Making Transition Work for Women in Europe and Central Asia: World Bank Discussion Paper 411*, ed. Marina Lazreg (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000).
127 Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century.*
128 Ibid.

from their British or French colonizers.[129] These authors go on to argue that shorter colonial rule in Africa can be used as an explanation for a weaker democratic legacy in some African countries.

The "transition paradigm" has a highly prescriptive character: it assumes that a particular condition of democracy has to be attained by any country. Democratization is seen as evolving according to several universal stages borrowed from the recent literature on democratization, such as the break-up of the previous regime, transition, and consolidation.[130] This language has filtered through into various policy documents: for example, one of the recent USAID NGO Sustainability Indexes uses "early transition, mid-transition, and consolidation" as the three stages of democratization according to which countries are classified. The question is of course whether this concern with pre-defined stages could stand in the way of appreciating those developments that do not fall neatly into the paradigm. Does this universalizing model of democratization not assume that democratic reform is always framed within the same set of institutions, which are designed in the image of those theorized by the Western liberal thought?

I concur with Carothers on the fact that the "transition paradigm" remains the dominant paradigm not only in policymaking, as I show in chapter four, but also in many academic analyses of assistance. There is a wealth of academic studies available today that aim to show whether and how assistance has facilitated transitions in the countries of the former Soviet Block. Rather than questioning the framework of assistance, these studies evaluate the impact of different donors according to the goals stated by the donors themselves. For example, Alexander Cooley, in an analysis published as part of the "Nations in Transit" report by Freedom House, looks at whether different donors have facilitated the transition to Western-style democracies and market economies. He shows that different donors have had different impacts on the developments in the former Soviet countries depending on the severity of conditions imposed by them. Having analyzed different cases, he argues that stricter conditionality led to major transformative impact, as for example in the cases of EU and NATO assistance, whereas the weaker conditionality that characterizes assistance by INGOs led to limited impact and helped to reform only those countries that already had a true commitment to change.[131]

This approach has also been taken up by Davis and Dombrowski, who distinguish between "explicit" and "implicit" conditionalities imposed by donors in order to explain the varying impact donors had on the consolidation of political and economic reforms in different

[129] The examples named are India, Sri Lanka, Jamaica or Senegal - as quoted in Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, p.48-49.
[130] Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994), Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*.
[131] Alexander Cooley, "Western Conditions and Domestic Choices: The Influence of External Actors on the Post-Communist Transition," in *Nations in Transit 2003: Democratization in East Central Europe and Eurasia*, ed. Freedom House (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

post-Soviet countries.[132] The implicit assumption of much research into assistance remains that universal lessons could be learnt to improve the aid/ assistance processes. Assistance is conceptualized as negotiation between donors and recipients in which both sides try to pursue their interests. In the overview that introduces their edited volume *Western Aid in Post-Communism: Effects and Side-effects*, Lehrer and Korhonen reach the following general conclusion:

> The lessons [to be learnt from assistance failures] derive largely from missed opportunities of coordination, information-sharing, and identification of complementary interests and appropriate beneficiaries. […] Had the lessons of prior aid experience in Latin America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa been more systematically transferred, perhaps some of the lost output, corruption, instability, violence, and trauma of post-communist experience might have been avoided.[133]

Although I share with these authors the conviction that assistance has gone awry on many fronts, my understanding of the underlying causes of these failures is different. As I substantiate further in this dissertation, the reasons that have "prevented" donors from learning from both their previous experiences and their current interactions with the recipients go beyond their lack of interest or commitment. I show that it is the discursive structure of the interaction between the donor and the recipient that places limits on how far both sides can go into mutual learning. Moreover, no universal lessons can be learned because the meaning of a successful assistance and a successful transition depends on particular contexts of assistance

Another crucial dimension of assistance is the transfer of ideas. The ideational perspective conceives of the impact of foreign assistance in terms of transition of and adaptation to ideas, values, and norms. It argues that looking at material and institutional conditions is not sufficient for understanding developments in different countries and that ideas, norms, and values should be researched with comparable zeal. Over the past two decades there has been a renewed interest in the role of ideas specifically in the context of foreign policy-making and transnational relations.[134] It has been argued that ideas matter, due to the constituting and socializing power that they have in both the international arena and domestic politics. They exert a "soft" form of power - to use an international relations term - that constitutes the interests and identities of actors rather than directly coercing them.[135] In

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132 Patricia Davis and Peter Dombrowski, "International Assistance to the Former Soviet Union: Conditions and Transitions," *Policy Studies Journal* 28, no. 1 (2000).

133 David Lehrer and Anna Korhonen, "Postcommunist Aid Negotiation: A Review of Recent Research," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no. 3 (2004): p.597.

134 Judith Goldstein and Robert O Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), Haas, *Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination,* Thomas Risse, Stephen C Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

135 On "soft power" see for example Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

line with the general idea of "transition", it is believed that the "West" has a role to play in exposing the "East" towards the right ideas and ideals. The actual mechanisms through which such "soft power" is exercised and the results it can (or indeed fails to) achieve in different contexts have been researched within the international socialization literature. Some light has been shed here on whether and how international norms can be adopted in different transition countries and the conditions and scope of influence of these norms on political systems, processes, and policies.[136] It is argued that exchanges of ideas on certain issues and the networks and coalitions that emerge around those ideas can (and should) substantially transform domestic as well as international politics.

In this dissertation I go further by arguing that ideas are not just an important part of reality or a tool of soft power but are themselves social and political phenomena that are embedded in socio-political and historical circumstances. For example, rather than looking at how successful the "transition paradigm" is in different environments, it is important to ask what constitutes this paradigm itself and what political implications follow from its utilization.

Another problematic feature of the "transition paradigm" is that foreign assistance in the form of grants, loans and technical assistance is conceived of as a merely technical intervention and not as a political tool closely connected to global political and economic interests as well as security considerations. Such a technical view of assistance leads to confusion and inconsistency: on the one hand, it is argued that it has to be up to domestic actors and structures to determine the outcome of democratic reform; on the other hand, assistance is introduced without looking into the nature of those domestic actors and structures and without problematizing the relations between domestic and foreign actors.

The "transition paradigm" is also criticized for its ethnocentric nature, which justifies a simple transfer of (ideal) models based on the cultural experience and ideology of donor countries. The most important implication of the "transition paradigm" is that it justifies the non-reflexive transplantation of norms, values and institutions onto the new assistance settings. This leads to ignoring the local forms of civic activism as well as the cultural and historical context of a given polity and to underestimating local ownership and local autonomy.[137] This seems reasonable given a "no preconditions" argument introduced as early as 1970, which sets forth an optimistic view that democracy can travel easily and "anyone can do it.[138] It can appear in places where no one would expect it from looking at the historical, political, and economic legacies of a given country. This argument, however, applies more to the unexpected break-ups of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes rather than to the actual processes of democratization. The fact that these two phenomena are conflated is illustrative of transition paradigm thinking. According to the infamous argument by Francis Fukuyama, after the collapse of communism in different places around the world we are witnessing "the

136 Ronald H. Linden, ed., *Norms and Nannies: The Impact of International Organizations on the Central and East European States* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).
137 Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: a critical exploration.*
138 Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Comparative Model," *Comparative Politics* 2, no. April (1970).

end of history" in the sense that history itself resolved the biggest twentieth century dispute about the best political system and capitalist liberal democracy proved to be the only alternative for the future. This implies that the demise of previous regimes equals (at least the first stage of) democratization.[139] Democracy, it has further been argued, does not need especially favorable conditions, and "genuine democrats need not precede democracy."[140] In other words, democracy is not brought about from within but is a result of an inevitable turn of history.

The literature cited here makes almost the exact opposite argument to both the "East" and the "West" civil society thinking I discussed above as far as the origins and the nature of democracy are concerned. Whereas the concept of civil society itself developed as a result of thinking about how citizens can ensure and contribute to democratic self-governance in their societies, the Western "transition paradigm", perhaps ironically, sees democracy in somewhat Marxian terms as a "natural" stage in a country's development.

Given this perhaps irreconcilable difference between the concept of civil society and those of democratization and transition, it is even more puzzling to see that, in fact, the notion of civil society has become one of the cornerstones of the post-Cold War democratization theory and practice. The following section addresses this puzzling connection.

1.3.2. Making democracy work: Civil society and NGO-ization

Civil society is believed to be essential for safeguarding the gains of democratization. It is seen as emerging from the democratic process rather than being a pre-condition to it: As Lary Diamond argues, civil society is probably more essential for consolidating and maintaining democracy than for initiating it. Civil society is said to contribute to deepening, consolidating,[141] and maintaining democracy in a variety of ways. It allows holding state officials accountable in between elections, stimulates political participation, and increases citizens' political efficacy and skill as well as elucidating norms of tolerance, trust, moderation, and accommodation in society. It also provides additional channels of interest expression and pursuit for marginalized groups. In addition, civil society can breed new political leaders and generally enhance the accountability, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and legitimacy of the political system, granting citizens respect for the state and positive engagement with it. Last but not least, many civil society organizations are explicitly engaged with improving democracy through election monitoring, human rights campaigns, democratic reform

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[139] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 3rd ed. (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1992).
[140] Giuseppe Di Palma, "Why Democracy Can Work in Eastern Europe," in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.261.
[141] Consolidation has been defined as fixing democratic rules and institutions in such a way that they gain primary influence on the behaviour of political actors as well as strengthening civil society and letting democratic values and norms penetrate the social fabric – as argued in Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions*. As a result, democracy becomes "so broadly and profoundly legitimate and so habitually practiced and observed that it is very unlikely to break down" Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, p.53.

initiatives, and anticorruption action.[142] In other words, there are few things civil society cannot do. This optimistic (over-) investment of the concept of civil society with the multiple democratic effects it can produce is one of the explanations for its emergence as a newly discovered missing link in progressive social development. This also explains its popularity as a foreign policy tool: civil society incorporates a variety of tasks and activities aimed at different social and political goals without entering the realm of party politics.

There are also other, practical reasons for the attractiveness of the civil society concept to many donors, whose aid budgets are now much smaller than during the Cold War period, such as, for example, the simple cost-effectiveness that it offers. Unlike large-scale industry reorganization,, banking restructuring, or engineering projects, support to NGOs does not require large inputs of capital; this allows both downsizing and maintaining programs and influence.[143] For example, US foreign aid shrank by approximately fifty per cent in real terms from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. "Civil society assistance made a virtue out of necessity by providing a theoretical justification for the small-scale assistance dictated by many donor budgets."[144]

The instrumentalization of the concept of civil society towards fulfilling a set of donors' priorities involved a redefinition of the concept itself. In a different way and to a different degree this re-definition took place both in the East and in the West, which leads me to conclude that the processes of "NGO-ization" of civil society described by several authors increasingly take on a global character.[145] NGOs are ever more formalized and professionalized, and they increasingly resemble bureaucratic corporate structures. In this sense, according to Mary Kaldor, they represent the "tamed" version of the "new" social movements. NGOs are often at the head of international campaigns; however, their methods are different from those of social movements or protest groups. "Instead of holding marches or hanging banners off buildings, NGO members now use computers and cell phones to launch global public-relations blitzes that can force issues to the top of policymakers' 'to do' lists."[146]

Unlike other, informally organized groups and movements, NGOs have the advantage of being closer to policy-makers and having expertise in certain policy areas. This point is also echoed by Jessica Mathews, who contends that, unlike social movements, NGOs are the real experts, whose "[…] expertise approximate[s] and sometimes exceed[s] those of smaller governments and of international organizations."[147] However, this proximity to the "traditional" bureaucrats may dull the critical edge of those NGOs. In this sense, there is always a tension between gaining more power and influence by entering the traditional power

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142 Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, eds., *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, p.29.
143 Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration.*
144 Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), p.8.
145 Sabine Lang, "The NGOization of Feminism," in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, ed. Joan W. Scott, Cora Kaplan, and Debra Keates (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), James Richter, "Promoting Civil Society?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 49, no. 1 (2002).
146 P.J. Simmons, "Learning to Live with NGOs," *Foreign Policy*, no. 112 (1998): p.84.
147 Mathews, "Power Shift," p.53.

structures and staying outside of them out of fear of cooptation. Such concerns are expressed, for example, in the analysis by Birchfield and Freyberg-Inan of the future potential of the ATTAC movement. The authors caution that to retain its popularity and political impact the organization should try to maintain a "balancing act" between "becoming institutionalized into the political mainstream or being resigned to the status of permanently alienated opposition."[148]

The more formal operationalization of civil society in terms of NGOs is also developed within some academic research, for example, the studies of the so-called "third sector" and its role in economic development conducted at the Johns Hopkins University Center for the Study of Civil Society.[149] The argument of these authors is that civil society as a sector may be "the greatest innovation of the twentieth century",[150] because "everyone is doing it" and we are "in the midst of a global 'associational revolution'."[151] In their own applied way, Salamon and Anheier are taking a structuralist and instrumentalist approach to pursuing the world-wide study of organizations which are formal, private, non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary. These organizations, they argue, have only recently been conceptualized as a social sphere that goes beyond more traditional oppositions of market vs. state or public vs. private. Salamon and Anheier and their colleagues classify and analyze third sector organizations worldwide and measure their impact on social capital and economic and political development. Their argument for reclaiming civil society as a sector is that, although it takes different forms in different contexts, it has developed into a major social and economic force that accounts for a far larger share of national employment and recent employment growth than is widely assumed. It also boasts substantial operating expenditures.[152] This line of research has contributed immensely to the connection and often substitution that is made between civil society and non-governmental organizations. In chapter two, I describe the empirical developments engendered by this turn to NGOs within the context of civil society assistance to the former Soviet Block.

Notwithstanding its weaknesses, due to its broad outlook, the NGO-impact studies approach acknowledges and empirically illustrates a few important points: firstly, that civil society organizations do not develop in the same way in all parts of the world; secondly, that their development is historically contingent; and, finally, that their relations with the state and the market are characterized by various degrees of proximity and overlap that make for relations more complex than usually assumed by the proponents of the triadic sectoral view. However, an attempt to introduce a distinction between civil society and the third sector is

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148 Vicki Birchfield and Annette Freyberg-Inan, "Constructing Opposition in the Age of Globalization: The Potential of ATTAC," *Globalizations* 1, no. 2 (2004): p.299, Annette Freyberg-Inan and Vicki Birchfield, "Organic Intellectuals and Counter-Hegemonic Politics in the Age of Globalization: The Case of ATTAC," in *Critical Theories, International Relations and 'the Anti-globalization Movement': the Politics of Global Resistance*, ed. Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, *RIPE series in global political economy* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005).

149 Lester M. Salamon and Helmut Anheier, "The Civil Society Sector," *Society: Social Science and Modern Society* 34, no. 2 (1997), Lester M. Salamon and Helmut Anheier, *The Emerging Sector Revisited: A Summary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, Center for Civil Society Studies, 1999).

150 Salamon and Anheier, *The Emerging Sector Revisited: A Summary*.

151 Lester M. Salamon, "The Rise of Nonprofit Sector," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 4 (1994).

152 Salamon and Anheier, *The Emerging Sector Revisited: A Summary*, p.61.

made only in passing and with no further implications for the "third sector" research framework. The claim that "the term 'civil society' would not apply to a particular sector, but to a relationship among the sectors, one in which a high level of cooperation and mutual support prevailed" never found further elaboration.[153] Instead, what was passed on by these studies was expertise in quantifying the activities of certain organizational units attributed to civil society and a justification for developing the tools that would allow doing so across a variety of contexts.

However, there is nothing universal about what NGOs are and how they operate in different contexts. The practical existence of NGOs is based on legal institutions and national norms in their home countries. In addition, more often than not, they receive substantial financial support from their own governments. It is increasingly the case that NGOs are contracted by their own governments as well as foreign donors to implement a range of projects at home as well as abroad. For example, a donor such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) rarely works with local institutions directly; instead it contracts for-profit or not-for-profit agencies to implement its programs, including those aimed at supporting local NGOs. This means that, regardless of the degree of freedom NGOs have, these contractual relationships have a defining impact on their priorities and procedures.

More specifically, contractual relationships between NGOs and their donors introduce undemocratic incentives for NGOs by emphasizing effective implementation over democratic practice. The moral mission of NGOs is often in conflict with issues of organizational survival. NGOs have to compete with each other for resources. They tend to downplay difficulties or problems and to focus on easily quantifiable successes that can be attractive to the mass media in order to increase their profile and improve their track record. In the words of Simmons, "even legitimate, well-established groups sometimes seize on issues that seem to be designed more to promote their own image and fundraising efforts than to advance the public interest."[154] One could mention here the Brent Spar incident or the failure to ratify the Convention on Biodiversity in the US to illustrate how actions of a particular NGO or coalition can create more confusion or even harm than contribute to the common good. Simmons suggests that such incidents are "a useful reminder of the complexity of the role that these groups now play in international politics […]; hailed as the exemplars of grassroots democracy in action, many NGOs are, in fact, decidedly undemocratic and unaccountable to the people they claim to represent."[155]

In addition, it is likely that organizations will show a high degree of adaptation to local contexts of operation in those cases when the local specificity can impact on their organizational survival. As Stephen Krasner states,

> […] for international actors coercion (especially formal legal requirements) and competitive pressures will lead to variations in institutional forms across

[153] Ibid., p.67.
[154] Simmons, "Learning to Live with NGOs," p.90.
[155] Ibid.: p.83.

> states. Transnational actors will organize themselves differently in different countries. They may arrange themselves as bribe givers in one place, lobbyists in another, and diplomatic emissaries in still a third.[156]

Transnational NGOs will perceive different tools and strategies as legitimate and/or effective depending on the context and the issue. They may choose to work with governments on a common project or they may choose to act independently, if not in an adversarial manner. My research has shown that, while in Ukraine several NGO projects emphasize the need for cooperation with the public sector, organize common roundtables on various issues, and are involved in strengthening local governance, transnational NGOs operating in Belarus tend to take a much more oppositional stand. Their choice of local counterparts among the domestic civil society groups is also driven by a variety of contextual factors; they may be in favor of working with grass-roots and community organizations in Russia and be wary of the same in some of the Central Asian countries, where grass-roots activism is often driven by nationalist and religious agendas. Women's NGOs may seek transnational coalitions, especially around such international campaigns as "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence", and yet show lack of interest in domestic women's groups that do not talk the language of "gender" or "activism".

There are several comparative works published to date from which it follows that there are persistent structural features of civil society promotion programs that create problematic outcomes and unintended consequences in very different contexts.[157] According to the comparative analysis by Ottaway and Carothers across Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, the dependencies of NGOs on their donors in these otherwise very different contexts are so strong because their survival is predicated on their interaction with the donors and not with fellow-citizens or institutions. The impact that different material and institutional factors have on the nature and activities of NGOs has been addressed in the literature that combines insights from political economy and organization studies. The former perspective gives primary importance to the material factors that define NGO existence, whereas the latter shows theoretically as well as empirically how institutional isomorphism impacts upon the identities and behaviors of organizations.[158] Both bodies of literature, however, tend to dismiss the idea(l) of civil society and democracy as pure rhetoric or "lip service" that is of no consequence in the face of material power relations. In other words, such studies are skeptical of the proclaimed missions and value statements and tend to look for the real reasons for donor engagement that may hide "behind" their lofty words.

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[156] Stephen D. Krasner, "Power Politics, Institutions, and Transnational Relations," in *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures, and International Relations*, ed. Thomas Risse-Kappen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.261.

[157] Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion,* Chris M. Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration,* Alison Van Rooy, ed., *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The politics and promise* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1998).

[158] See, for example, Roland Vaubel and Thomas D. Willett, eds., *The Political Economy of International Organizations: A Public Choice Approach* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

For example, Alexander Cooley and James Ron examine three different cases of transnational assistance[159] to show and explain failures of implementation and negative (un-)intended consequences that resulted from the operation of different international actors in various contexts. Drawing on their findings, the authors interpret some dysfunctional organizational behavior as a rational response to systematic and predictable institutional pressures to which international organizations are subjected, such as competition for resources, hierarchical relationships, organizational insecurity, and fiscal uncertainty. It is contended that, contrary to the global/ transnational civil society arguments discussed above, the growth of NGOs worldwide and their increasing involvement in policy-making and policy implementation lead to an increase in uncertainty, competition, and insecurity for NGOs rather than strengthening them. It is also suggested that the increasing bureaucratization and marketization of NGO activities generates incentives that produce dysfunctional outcomes.[160]

Having analyzed Russian NGOs from the same neoinstitutionalist perspective, Henderson has reached very similar conclusions. She contends that, despite the funders' self-proclaimed moral intentions, they helped institutionalize a vertical and isolated (although well-funded) civic community based on "principled clientelism".[161] According to Henderson, this is a direct result of the so-called "grant game", which consists of "a set of incentives and sanctions that encourages a separate pattern of behavior that undermines rather than facilitates civic behavior" and impedes collective action.[162] She also pays attention to idiosyncrasies between the donor's organizational styles and those of the recipients of assistance and argues that they predetermine the outcomes to a greater extent than proclaimed agendas and envisioned goals. She finds, for example, that "the goals of many Western agencies were to facilitate small, grassroots initiatives. Yet Russian civic groups tried to mimic the organizational style of the Western assistance agencies operating in Russia, which are wealthy, centralized, and bureaucratized 'corporate' NGOs."[163]

Such analysis, however, misses an important dimension, namely that of specific ideas or discourses that enable particular organizational forms and incentives. The processes described by Cooley and Ron as well as by Henderson would have been inconceivable without the managerial discourse of "performance", "outcomes", and "efficiency". None of these notions are simple givens, and alternative situations could exist in which NGO activities and organizational forms could be organized, for example, by an alternative discourse of "long-term commitment".

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[159] The three cases are: 1.) economic technical assistance by for-profit corporations operating in Kyrgyzstan under contracts by Western governments, International Financial Institutions, and the UN; 2.) refugee aid by INGOs in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire); and 3.) IO and INGO efforts to protect prisoners of war in Bosnia.

[160] Alexander Cooley, "International Aid to the Former Soviet States: Agent of Reform or Guardian of the Status Quo?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 47, no. 4 (2000), Alexander Cooley and James Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action," *International Security* 27, no. 1 (2002).

[161] Sarah Henderson, "Selling civil society: Western aid and nongovernmental organization sector in Russia," *Comparative political studies* 35, no. 2 (Winter) (2002): p.140.

[162] Ibid.: p.146.

[163] Ibid.: p.143.

Another limitation of such a materialist perspective on civil society is that it tends to, first, naturalize existing power relations and, second, overemphasize socio-economic hardships to the extent that individuals emerge as primarily conditioned by those. On the first point, it seems too simplistic to take for granted the idea that rich donors always determine the activities of those in need of resources. Even though conventional wisdom tells us that "he who pays the piper calls the tune", it would make most of political analysis redundant if all it took to understand politics were to find out who pays. On the second point the literature comes too close to implying that no ideal can be pursued until material needs are satisfied. If this were directly translatable into social reality, it would mean that the poor would show the highest level of individualism and rent-seeking among all groups. However, in the real world one often finds the exact opposite, when altruism, solidarity, and mutual support are particularly strong under harsher circumstances. In fact, many of the examples of women's activism presented in chapter two are in contradiction with such a "material security first" argument.

1.4. Conclusion

In the second half of the twentieth century Eastern European socialist societies presented a peculiar social and political context, in which the relationships between the public and the private sphere were defined by a lack of personal freedom and total politicization. Civil society was, under these conditions, proposed as a realm that would allow individual self-expression and freedom of moral judgment. In contrast, the re-emergence of civil society theories in the "West" was most often seen as a response to the growing individualism and apathy that characterized capitalist societies of the same period. The main purpose of civil society in this context was thus to aid in a revival of the public sphere and of various associations preoccupied with a shared social purpose. Although notions such as "solidarity", "trust", and "civic awareness" were widely used in both sites, it should not be assumed that the conceptions of civil society with which they were associated were the same. To complicate matters further, neither theoretical realm or site of knowledge production produced a single dominant interpretation of the reality encountered or a coherent body of literature. In addition, an emerging literature on transnational relations provided the framework for another conception of civil society that strove to go beyond the geopolitical divisions that characterized the world during the Cold War. Now that this particular historical condition is past, ideas of "global civil society" gain even more prominence. However, their disjunction from a particular locality is at the same time their strength and their weakness. This dissertation is a theoretical and empirical attempt to further clarify the resulting emerging research agenda.

What is more, this chapter has shown that applied theories on how civil society can and should be promoted in the former Soviet Block are embedded in a particular approach – the "transition paradigm". According to this approach, the future trajectory of post-socialist

countries has been assumed to be clear and self-evident (on both sides of the old Cold War divide, even if for different reasons), and no space has been created for innovative thinking about solutions for individual countries. Instead, all countries involved were seen as being on "the road to democracy", and their political and social life was analyzed in terms of following or deviating from this path as well as meeting the "universal" expectations of democratization. However, fifteen years after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, reality seems much more complex and ambivalent than that. For practical and political reasons foreign assistance has become an important factor on the post-Soviet political scene, and thus, the intended and unintended effects it has created deserve careful examination.

Overall, the tendency in policy-making is to support formal professionalized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – a trend which has been termed the "NGOization" of civil society. This tendency is equally visible in Western democracies and in the context of civil society assistance to the former Soviet countries. Seen from this perspective, the dialogue between foreign assistance and local NGOs is shaped by their shared institutional environment and the set of incentives and constraints it imposes. Some of these institutional features include bureaucratization, a focus on short-term goals, and competition. They can prevent NGOs, both transnational and domestic, from building long-term relationships and from learning from their common failures and successes. They also inevitably exclude from the dialogue a variety of NGOs that do not fit into such institutional arrangements. In the next chapter, I will look into the practical effects of NGO-ization that have been observed in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries.

Overall, the scholarly literature is unanimous in attributing an important role to donor programs. Even if they diverge in their theoretical approaches and political judgments, most authors point out that it is key to account for the dialogue between foreign donors and local civil societies. Building on these diverse findings, this dissertation asks how exactly foreign assistance matters for the development of a local civil society.

Chapter 2: Assisting Women's Activism in Ukraine

2.1. Civil Society and Gender in (Post-)Socialism

In the previous chapter I have introduced theorizing by Eastern European thinkers that developed as a response to particular conditions of "post-totalitarianism". I have focused in particular on conceptions of "public" and "private" and the role of civil society. In this section, I elaborate on these notions further by outlining empirical conditions and identities that were formed at that time. I also discuss the issues of continuity and change pertaining to the collapse of the Soviet system. This chapter provides a general overview of how civic activism in general and towards women's issues in particular developed before and after the collapse of socialism. The aim of this account is to lay open the complexities of the empirical context as well as the continuities and divergences between the so-called socialist and post-socialist periods. Since the focus of this dissertation is on the dialogue between the "West" and the "East", this chapter shows how this dialogue has developed between women-activists and points to tensions it contains.

2.1.1. The varying perceptions of activism

Eastern European societies before 1989 as well as the Soviet Union were characterized by the dictatorship of a political bureaucracy over society, which underwent economic and social leveling – a condition often referred to as "post-totalitarianism".[164] Unlike in the fully totalitarian system, in post-totalitarianism or late socialism brutal repression and government by fear took on a more anonymous and selective form. The regime no longer strove to fully control the bodies and souls of its subjects and to bring everyone under a single will; what it required was rather passivity, opportunism, mediocrity, and cynicism. The post-totalitarian system demanded conformity, uniformity, and discipline, rather than faith and commitment.

As exemplified by the notions of a "parallel society" discussed in chapter one, the gap between the official propaganda and the social and political reality was so tremendous that many citizens of socialist countries developed deep-seated distrust not only of public institutions and official channels of information – be they the state controlled mass media or educational systems – but also of discourses that constituted the public sphere. As an

[164] Havel, "The Power of the Powerless."

anecdote goes: when people in the former Soviet Union received the opportunity to travel abroad more easily[165] in the early 1990s, some were utterly surprised to find out that the Apartheid regime in South Africa as well as racism in the USA actually existed and were not inventions of Soviet anti-capitalist propaganda.

Slavoj Zizek coined the term "cynical subjects" to refer to the citizens who were aware of the gap between ideology and social reality and at the same time chose to adapt to this gap rather than to take an active stance in changing the situation.[166] In these societies, between the two minorities of those who were truly convinced in the ideals of the Communist Party and those who were actively dissident, the majority of the people – whether party members or not - were consciously passive and shared an aversion to grand ideas of any sort. Differences between different socialist countries notwithstanding, what seemed to have been shared by everyone living under "socialism" was their antipathic position vis-à-vis an all-intrusive state that was imposing particular identities and a particular belief system on them.

In this context, the meaning of terms such as "independent" activities or a "parallel polis" calls for further explanation. The fact that these activities were conducted outside of the official state-controlled public sphere does not suffice for their understanding. The often-quoted examples of "underground" cultural activities were very different from both individual acts of civil disobedience by dissidents and wider anti-communist social movements. These activities were everything the state, official culture, and ideology were not – a way of disregarding the official culture rather than confronting it. These tendencies became increasingly widespread in the 1970s and 80s, among the so-called "last Soviet generation". As Alexei Yurchak, a cultural anthropologist and a representative of the last Soviet generation himself, put it, "in this respect, it is more accurate to speak, for example, of nonofficial culture than of 'counter culture' or the 'underground', both of which imply resistance to or subversion of official ideology and culture, and thus an *involvement* in their official logic."[167] In other words, the strategy was developed to disregard the official public sphere and to mock it in the private. This strategy, however, did not entail direct confrontation or purposeful subversion.

This idea of "non-involvement" produced a peculiar understanding of what a politically meaningful action was. The fact that official ideology was built around notions borrowed from Marxian class struggle created a strong aversion among the passive majority against ideas of political mobilization of any kind. It meant that any claim to bigger ideals or any activist position ending with an "-ism" were perceived with a high degree of distrust and even disdain. As is vividly captured by a quote from Jan Jirous, an art historian closely associated with the musical underground: "any vertical organization – hierarchization – of the

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[165] While acknowledging a considerable amount of strict regulation and policing of East-West movement of people that persists up to this day, by saying "freely" I refer to an opportunity to travel without meticulous screening and close supervision by the KGB before as well as during the visit abroad, as was the case during the Soviet Union.

[166] Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1991).

[167] Alexei Yurchak, "The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology and Culture of the Last Soviet Generation" (Duke University, 1997), p.5, emphasis in the original.

'independent society' would at the same time bring its demise […]; an organization requires both a hierarchy and a program; *we are fed up with both.*"[168]

These attitudinal dynamics also had an important impact on the public understanding of "acts of civil courage", their nature and their scope. Here "civil courage" refers not only to overt protests and political actions but also to expressing oneself freely in small-scale every-day situations. According to an insightful and empirically grounded analysis by Krzysztof Nowak, the oppressive system was based not only on overt revolutionary terror and coercion but also on an intricate set of mechanisms or, in Nowak's words, "defense lines" that sustained the stability and "no-alternativity" of the communist regime. The "legitimation of the regime through no-alternativity" was performed through "constraint applied indirectly or 'reified' in forms of social life and symbolic communication."[169] Such peculiar forms of oppression fed into a "pragmatic attitude" or a "cynical reason" on the part of the majority of society, which was based on protecting oneself and one's life through abstinence from public action, through pragmatic conformity based not on belief or conviction but on convenience. Such convenience came with a price – even in small-scale every-day situations, let alone in mass public gatherings, people would choose to remain silent.

Nowak holds that this line of defense works set up by the state was built upon instilling despondency and a sense of hopelessness. In the words of one of his informants: "There was no such situation in which people were afraid to speak up. Whereas, people did not want to talk because *they had become convinced as to the ineffectiveness of speaking up.*"[170] The pragmatic choice not to get involved also led to a lack of appreciation of other people's active positions. Nowak describes this rationale very well: "One becomes a hero when one braves a great danger in the name of a grand cause, while exposing oneself to harassment only because one is attracted to the more common and less grandiose values is tantamount to earning the label of an impractical person who does poorly in life in spite of his noble intentions."[171]

This shows that the position of a dissident was much more ambivalent than is usually assumed these days. It also points to a tension which is often overlooked, due to the overall enthusiasm that the figure of a dissident evokes, especially in the West – a tension around the meaning of being a dissident in a socialist society. Many people have tried to address the issue of the apparently marginal and almost detested position of dissidents during socialism. For example, Václav Havel argued that dissidents were avoided by the majority in society due to fear of being associated with them or due to the shame of being afraid while others were outspokenly opposing the system.[172] On the other hand, the Russian poet Joseph Brodsky has disputed Havel's claim by pointing out that, given the seeming stability of the system, dissidents were simply perceived as impractical and slightly abnormal, a sort of "God's fools"

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[168] Jan Jirous in Benda et al., "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe," p.227, emphasis added.
[169] Nowak, "Covert Repressiveness and the Stability of a Political System: Poland at the End of the Seventies," p.181.
[170] Ibid.: p.201, emphasis in the original.
[171] Ibid.: p.196.
[172] Vaclav Havel, "The Post-Communist Nightmare," *The New York Review of Books http://www.nybooks.com/nyrev* 1993, p.8.

deserving pity rather than active support.[173] Such an ambivalent relationship between the figure of a dissident and the majority of the people also continued after the collapse of the Soviet system.

In a somewhat prophetic essay written just a few months before the historical change of 1989 Jiřina Šiklová talks about the "silent majority", people in the "gray zone" who, although politically uninterested, will be of immense importance in the course of anticipated changes. Šiklová supposed that the people who were not involved in active opposition during socialism would turn out to be "the ones who will take over the leadership of the society."[174] These people

> […] are employed within the structure, in jobs roughly in keeping with their qualifications; they are not ostracized, they want to retain the minor advantages that the regime grants those who stay within the norm. At the same time, they strive not to get "into" anything, not to damage anyone; they are often helpful to others persecuted by the political regime. On the other hand, they take no visible stands against the establishment and so to some degree compromise themselves.[175]

According to Šiklová's predictions, which turned out to be largely true in the light of subsequent events, such people would move to the forefront the moment the situation would change and new opportunities for employing skills and expertise would arise, whereas the dissidents might have to face redundancy. "The dissidents may have moral superiority, but they must also realize that they have lived, or survived, for twenty years outside 'the structure', for the most part in isolation, out of touch with scientific institutions and institutes."[176] Šiklová also supposed that people who were actively opposing the regime could also experience a sort of a loss of identity after its demise:

> The dissidents will also lose much that is valuable to them […] Lost to them will be their unity, which up till now was considered a matter of course; their cohesiveness, their solidarity, their uniqueness, their moral superiority, their aura of being persecuted and ostracized, and along with these, a certain nonresponsibility for everything that is wrong in politics and society.[177]

Another precaution voiced by the dissidents themselves concerned the idealization of the views and methods of dissidents and the demonization of those of former communists. Instead, as Adam Michnik has argued, both should be seen as mutually constitutive identities

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[173] Joseph Brodsky and Vaclav Havel, "The Post-Communist Nightmare: A Discussion," *The New York Review of Books http://www.nybooks.com/nyrev* 1994.
[174] Jirina Siklova, "The "Gray Zone" and the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia," *Social Research* 57, no. 2 (1990: Summer [September 1989]): p.350.
[175] Ibid.: p.354.
[176] Ibid.: p.357.
[177] Ibid.: p.353.

created by and embedded in the socialist system. This means that both should be transformed under the new circumstances.

> Immediately after Communism, the following problem arose: we all – both the Communists and the anti Communists – were bastards of the Communist system, who were mentally shaped by this system. And so a tendency immediately emerged of wanting to replace the Communists, as soon as they were removed from power, by the Solidarity structures. So that after "the leading role of the Communist Party" – as we used to call it – comes the time of the leading role of the Solidarity trade union. And further, from the churches' pulpits you easily hear: "for forty-five years we had Communists in power – now it is time for us, the Catholics."[178]

In addition, many of the dissidents who had been active during socialism did not become active in the public life after its collapse. With the exception of a few prominent figures, like Václav Havel in the Czech Republic, there was almost no connection between dissidents and post-1989 elites; even more strikingly, in many countries, including Ukraine, the old *nomenklatura* successfully moved into post-1989 positions of power. General patterns of societal relations that developed under socialism persisted after its collapse, thus shaping the new post-socialist societies alongside with the new processes of democratization and introduction of market economy.

Coming back to the discussion of the "as if game" that I have introduced in the previous chapter, it is important to acknowledge the persistence of informal networks and a peculiar type of individualism and particularism that developed as a response of acting "as if" in the socialist public sphere. In her analysis Peggy Watson spells out the following dynamic: The perceived lack of scope for effective autonomous action in the public sphere triggered two complementary tendencies. First, it led to the valorization of an "insider" status in the public sphere and the increased negative significance of an "outsider" status. This could be rephrased as an overall lack of trust in fellow-citizens other than those that belong to one's family or personal network and even as heightened social intolerance – a peculiar mixture of social vulnerability and hostility. Second, the overall disbelief in political and social goals officially declared in public was supplemented by the rise of an individualist, consumption-oriented, and family-centered ideology, which, however, was difficult to pursue given low standards of living, limited availability of consumer goods, and low quality of social services. Watson provides an illuminating comparison between the post-War Stalinist era (the 50s) and the late socialism (especially the 70s and 80s). Whereas the living and working conditions as well as state coercion were harsher in the post-War period, the overall dynamism, social mobility, and increased levels of education experienced then translated into a (more strongly) shared sense of social advancement. In contrast, the late socialism was characterized by both a higher quality of life and a higher dissatisfaction with it, by an increased feeling that it was impossible to reach self-fulfillment. This latter tendency was due to the inability of citizens to

[178] Michnik, "The Rebirth of Civil Society," p.164.

engage reflexively with formal institutions and the public sphere, on the one hand, and to the lack of opportunity and resources to fulfill individual goals, on the other.[179]

This dynamic also translated into particular understandings of the "public good" and of appropriate ways to produce and to (re)distribute goods and benefits in the society. Again, as a critique on an unreflective assumption that civil society – understood as a parallel polis or otherwise – necessarily produces the desired democratic effects, the other face of "parallel activities" can be evoked. During socialism, the "parallel polis" comprised not only parallel cultural or political activities but also a parallel economy. These informal economic networks were a way to make up for the failures of distribution in the state-controlled economic system and for the ineffectiveness of state social services. They embodied a survival strategy that was employed not by the politically or socially marginalized minority but by the majority of the population that was underprivileged by the state. Ironically perhaps, in late socialism the bureaucratic state apparatus itself was thoroughly pervaded by the "economy of favors" and clientelist networks.[180] Even more interestingly, the parallel economy was largely perceived as an effective response to the failures of the socialist system and in that sense as a way to contribute to the common good. An administrator who used personal networks to arrange some extra benefits for a particular enterprise would more commonly be seen as socially responsible rather than corrupt. In fact, these perceptions are still very visible today, especially on the local level. Mayors and civil servants still draw their legitimacy from delivering services rather than from adhering to transparent democratic procedures.[181] In general, the public good is defined in terms of material security and good services rather than in terms of legal equality or justice.

What is often overlooked in the analysis of (post-) socialism is that, empirically speaking, the widely acclaimed "parallel polis" and the often stigmatized "parallel economy" are two sides of the same pattern of survival strategies developed by the society in the face of an ideologized, intrusive, and ineffective state. Both faces of the "parallel polis" are embedded in the particular condition of (post-) socialism:

> Both were based on the ethics of particularist loyalty in the face of the regime that paid lip service to the common good. Both included an effort to create and reproduce a sphere of relative autonomy from the totalitarian ambitions of the state. This can, on one level of analysis, be treated as "resistance"; on another level, however, it can be seen as a way of adapting oneself to the existing mechanisms of domination – and even of reproducing them.[182]

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[179] Peggy Watson, "Explaining rising mortality among men in Eastern Europe," *Social Science & Medicine* 41, no. 7 (1995).

[180] See for example Steven Sampson, "The informal sector in Eastern Europe," *Telos* 66, no. Winter (1986).

[181] This is evident in different post-socialist countries. Henk van de Graaf notes the same attitudes in local administrations in Romania: "the mayor is corrupt but we have got asphalt on the streets" (November 9, 2005, personal communication).

[182] Mikko Lagerspetz, "From 'Parallel Polis' to 'The Time of the Tribes': Post-Socialism, Social Self-Organization and Post-Modernity," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 17, no. 2 (2001): p.6.

Instead of having an ethical and political potential, it can endorse clientelism, nepotism and hidden corruption[183] in the form of informal distributive and power networks.

The degree to which these informal "parallel" structures shaped the (post-) socialist societies and impacted on the nature of their transformations is reflected in the following analysis by Janine Wedel. In her account of Polish society in 1990 Wedel describes

> […] a complex system of informal relations, in such forms as "social circles", horizontal linkage networks, and patron-client connections, all carried on in one sense outside authorized institutions […]. Although not explicitly institutional, the relationships are regularized and have clear patterns. Understanding these patterns is the key to understanding not only Polish society today [back in 1990] but also how it is going to respond to coming changes.[184]

Indeed, the persistence of informal and network structures of social and political relationships in the former socialist countries has been emphasized in some of the literature.[185] Given the changing socio-economic context, the actual services that are exchanged through these informal networks may be changing: For example, in addition to the exchange of primary goods and services, there is also more and more exchange of practical information. However, the relationships themselves still largely shape the political, social, and economic developments in the former socialist states. The history of privatization in the early 1990s is perhaps one of the most notorious examples of how administrative resources were utilized by the old Soviet elite to maintain economic and political power after the collapse of socialism.[186]

Some researchers conclude that not only do such informal networks remain strong in the post-socialist societies but they also have proven to be a major obstacle to democratic change.

> The founding principle of the "power of the powerless" – the stress on "immediate personal trust and the informal rights of individuals" has in the post-socialist condition become, from being a shield against totalitarian ambitions of the repressive state, a major obstacle for the development of democracy beyond formal, procedural participation.[187]

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[183] The difference between hidden and open corruption is that the former refers to the use of connections and network ties for accessing resources and benefits and is therefore often a straightforward survival strategy, whereas the latter is connected to abuse of political and administrative resources Ibid..

[184] Janine R. Wedel, "The Ties That Bind," in *Polish Paradoxes*, ed. Stanislaw Gomulka and Anthony Polonsky (London: Routledge, 1990), p.241.

[185] Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchanges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Alena V. Ledeneva, S. Lovell, and A. Rogatchevsii, eds., *Bribery and Blat in Russia* (Macmillan, 2000).

[186] For a detailed analysis of privatization in the former socialist states see Anthony Levitas and Piotr Strzalkowski, "What Does *Uwlaszczenie Nomenklatury* [Propertization of Nomenklatura] Really Mean?," *Communist Economies* 2, no. 3 (1990), David Stark and Laszlo Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For the analysis of elite networks in general one of the core references is Verdery, *What Was Socialism, And What Comes Next?*

[187] Lagerspetz, "From 'Parallel Polis' to 'The Time of the Tribes': Post-Socialism, Social Self-Organization and Post-Modernity," p.13.

This points to the tension between the idea of "anti-politics" discussed in chapter one and the actual reality of the political transformation in those countries. When the socialist regime went down, the envisioned public sphere as a sight of morality did not get strengthened but disappeared along with this regime. In a way, the ideologized official public sphere and the alternative "parallel polis" were mutually reinforcing constructions. Both must be understood as a legacy of (post-) socialist societies, but neither can continue to exist without the other. While the informal relations persisted, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to formal and legal changes that enabled new forms of civic participation. Below I focus more specifically on the rise and the development of non-governmental organizations in Ukraine.

As the state system changed, the legal normative basis that regulated civic activism in Ukraine was also transformed. The Soviet law that had declared any unsanctioned gathering of more than three people for other than personal purposes illegal was abolished. Two important laws were passed: the Law "On Citizens' Associations" (in 1992) and the Law "On Charity and Charitable Foundations" (in 1997). This enabled the growth of officially registered civic organizations. To illustrate the growth, some numbers are compiled in table 1 below.

Table 1:
Quantitative dynamics of NGO development in Ukraine[188]

Year	Number of NGOs
1991	319
1992	1, 356
1993	3, 257
1994	5, 302
1995	8, 352
1998	17, 781
1999	22, 263
2001	25, 500
2002	30, 000
2005	41, 000

However, the numbers themselves are a poor indicator of what the NGO boom is about. My field research into women's NGOs specifically points to the fact that on average 50% of officially registered NGOs exist only on paper (as so-called "briefcase" NGOs). For example, during my field visit to Kharkov I did the following recount of women's NGOs that were registered with the municipality as of January 1, 2002. The list consisted of 52 NGOs, out of

[188] This data is compiled from published research reports by the Innovation and Development Centre, Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences, SOCIS, and the CIVICUS Index on Civil Society, and Counterpart Creative Center over the period 1994-2005.

which at the moment of my inquiry seventeen did not exist; eleven were in reality no more than four with several "official" faces each; and only five turned out to be active organizations, whose set-up and activities corresponded directly to what the official registry presented. The remaining nineteen NGOs were private creations by one or two energetic personalities. Such MONGOs (My Own NGOs), as I suggest calling them, were only operational when and if their creator thought it useful. In the majority of cases an NGO was composed only by a few women equipped with an Internet connection and a fax machine. I offer further evidence and analysis of these developments in chapters five and six.

In addition to often existing only on paper, NGOs are not evenly distributed across the country. According to the data collected by a research team of Ukrainian civic leaders, considerably fewer NGOs are found in the agricultural areas (36-41 of officially registered NGOs per 100,000 people); in the developed areas the number of NGOs is higher (50-68 NGOs per 100,000 people); and the highest rate is found in the capital (87 NGOs per 100,000 people). The number in Kharkov, the second biggest city, is average (52 NGOs per 100,000 people). Most NGOs operate within a particular city (39%), 33% of NGOs work within the whole *oblast*, and 8% have national and international status (those are mainly based in Kiev, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odessa, or Donetsk).[189]

The numbers quoted above cannot be treated as a direct indication of civic activism writ large, in fact overall civic participation in Ukraine remained low throughout the 1990s.[190] The levels of membership and the numbers of volunteer personnel are extremely low compared to NGOs in Western Europe and even in the "new" EU member states. Ironically, as the number of civic organizations was growing in the 1990s, citizen participation in them was decreasing. If 30% of the population were members of civic organizations in 1991, this number dropped to 13% by 1996 and came down even further to 7.8% in 1999. Here it is important to remember that the average profile of a civic organization in Ukraine also changed towards the mid- and the late 1990s. The civic groups that were active and/ or had large constituencies before 1991[191] had either disappeared or became considerably less active. James Richter in his analysis of post-Soviet Russia summarizes this tendency in the following way:

> The movement organizations did not fare well in the first decade of the post-Soviet era […]; civic powerlessness dominated the society. Many people expected the state to supply their education, employment, housing, health care, and even recreation, as it had under the Soviet regime, and *the continued concentration of political and economic* power gave them little reason to believe that public action would change anything. Most Russians again *retreated into private*

[189] The data is taken from Svitlana Kuts et al., "CIVICUS Index on Civil Society: Strengthening the Roots of Civil Society in Ukraine," (Kiev: CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, 2001).

[190] The remarkable events during the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine in the end of 2004 may be seen as an indicator that popular attitudes to and ideas of civic activism may be transforming. Yet, as far as NGOs specifically are concerned, there are fewer reasons to believe that their position in the society has changed considerably since the time of the research quoted above.

[191] In Ukraine in particular, these were mainly oriented at Ukrainian cultural and historical revival ("Heritage", "Memorial"), environmental problems ("Green World") as well as human rights (the Ukrainian Helsinki Group).

> *worlds* relying on their gardens, *their networks*, and barter to insulate themselves from economic turmoil.[192]

According to the nationwide sociological poll conducted by the Innovation and Development Centre in Kiev in 2000, the general level of participation in public life was fairly low: 59% of Ukrainians reported to never have taken part in public life. For NGOs specifically, the figures reflect even lower interest: 83% of the population never took part in NGO activities. The main reasons provided by respondents were: no free-time - 18.9%, lack of desire - 16.8%, absence of trust in public organizations - 8.4%, absence of desired types of NGOs - 7.9%, and lack of information concerning NGOs and their activities - 6.6%. Attitudes of the population towards NGOs are most positive in the cities (with 76% in Kiev and 51% the average across Ukraine). Out of those supporting NGOs, 75% have a university education. The majority of population is not well informed about the activities of NGOs.[193] In addition to the decrease in civic activism in general, the behavior of NGOs themselves is partly responsible for these tendencies. James Richter points out:

> Even committed social service organizations frequently reproduced the Soviet pattern of small private worlds, where the director and a few other activists – often personal friends or former coworkers – allocated organizational resources according to personal loyalty rather than more disinterested criteria. Such practices reinforced the perception that NGOs exist primarily to enrich the organizers, discouraging others from participating in NGO activities.[194]

Being new in their structure, NGOs remain embedded in a complex web of "old" and "new" types of social relations.

2.1.2. The meanings of gender and women's issues

In the socialist or post-totalitarian context, gender as one of the key dimensions of subjectivity also had peculiar characteristics. Unlike a more "classic" conception of gender as a binary opposition of power constituted by a dominating and a dominated side that originated in Western/Northern capitalist societies, gender in socialism was formed by a different power context. The gendered subject was positioned in higher-level power relations between the individual and the state. This resulted in a unique lived experience of a shared subjugated position by both genders, which did not eliminate gender differences but rather relativized them vis-à-vis other power structures.

As Hana Havelková, a prominent Czech sociologist, has argued, as a result of the totalizing nature of the socialist state "the orientation toward the private sphere was an

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[192] James Richter, "Evaluating Western Assistance to Russian Women's Organizations," in *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sarah Mendelson and John K. Glenn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p.58, emphasis added.
[193] Oleksander Sydorenko, "Civic and Charitable Organizations in Ukraine," (Kiev: Innovation and Development Center, 2000).
[194] Richter, "Evaluating Western Assistance to Russian Women's Organizations," p.59.

essential, psychologically formative consequence of the suppression of public subjectivity. The family assumed a special function as the *refuge of moral values*."[195] Here the connection to ideas of civil society as a sphere of morality is clear. Given the strong party control over education, media, and other forms of public discourse, family and close friends were the only alternative "schools of political thought", spaces for critical discussion and moral education. This seems to stand in stark contrast to the classical idea that morality and education cannot be obtained through family or kinship ties but only through civil society. Civil society in socialism was located in the private sphere, whereas in liberal democracy it is located in the public sphere. Therefore, "as a consequence of the practice of really existing socialism,[196] the concepts of private and public have meanings and functions different from those of Western countries […]; the relation of the individual subject to the public sphere is abstract, while the subject's relation to the private one is concrete."[197]

In a less idealistic tone, other scholars have used the label of "neo-traditionalism" coined by Jowitt to describe this dynamic.[198] In her analysis Peggy Watson shows that the tremendous importance of family and household was a sign of "creative" social adaptation to systemic exclusion in the public sphere that was experienced by both men and women under socialism. In those industrially modern societies traditional family models were preserved by the society in order to create alternative spaces for self-articulation, to organize social life, and to sustain "coherence" – all of which was to help self-protection and survival. In this way, individual survival was connected to family survival, which in turn crucially depended on the "learned resourcefulness" of women, their paid and unpaid labor.[199] In other words, both men and women subscribed to a traditionalist gender division partly as a result of their peculiar relation to the socialist state. To my mind, seeing gender in this way is crucial for understanding the seeming lack of gender awareness by Eastern European women bemoaned by their Western counterparts. I would argue that, on the contrary, in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union women were acutely conscious of the gendered nature of their social relationships but perceived them as the only survival strategy vis-à-vis the state system.

According to an in-depth analysis by Hana Havelková, rather than being an issue of "false consciousness", the disinterest in feminism and the desire to attain positive change and equality for men and women alike has to be conceptualized in different terms due to the specificity of the socialist system as experienced by both men and women. Havelková attributes this "supra-feminist" syndrome, as she calls it, to specifically socialist forms of individual subjectivity and private/public distinction. Since the totalitarian government strove to undermine individual autonomy and exercised objectifying practices vis-à-vis all its citizens, men and women alike, "a positive concept of the subject" defended by feminist theorists in

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[195] Hana Havelkova, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p.68, emphasis added.

[196] "Really existing socialism" is a label used by the Communist Party to indicate the particular condition that was said to have been established in the communist block and was believed to be a stage preceding communism.

[197] Havelkova, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p.69.

[198] K. Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Extinction of Leninism* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1992).

[199] Watson, "Explaining rising mortality among men in Eastern Europe."

the West had to be applied to men as well.[200] In a similar fashion, in socialism - unlike in the West - the gendered divisions of power did not correspond to the division between public and private: An "…overriding division was drawn between the Communist Party and all those who were its objects. In spite of the fact that women did not sit on the Party Central Committee, they, like men, were given positions in accordance with the degree of their loyalty, not their abilities."[201] This point is echoed by Peggy Watson, who writes that "under state socialism, society was politically excluded *as a whole*, and citizens, far from feeling excluded relative to each other, were held together in a form of political unity, it was this essential unity that made possible the idea of Solidarity."[202]

Some authors have argued that the importance of the private sphere as a counterbalance to the oppressive system and the central role that women played in it placed them in a more privileged position as compared to men. "Where the subject was oppressed in the public sphere, the family represented for the woman, much more than the man, the possibility of choice and escape from the political blackmail. Women consciously made use of this opportunity."[203] Without any intention to overestimate the gains that such gendered divisions gave to women, I would argue that there was more congruence between the gender expectations of women and opportunities they had to meet them than was the case for men. Peggy Watson expresses a similar idea when she refers to "a fixed and traditional notion of masculine identity in a political and economic context, which thwarted traditional masculinity by precluding autonomous activity outside of the private sphere."[204] Public performance and career were often tied to compromising oneself and one's principles in favor of the official party ideology. Facing such pressures, men were in need to reassert their self-worth and their masculinity in the face of day-to-day humiliation and ideological pretence. Such refuge was only available in the private realm. In this sense, unbalanced as they were, Eastern European roles in the family, which might have seemed to reinforce traditional gender roles and formulas like "two people – one career", had a different meaning and a different economy behind them. This is also evident from Havelková's observation that many women admitted to having deliberately encouraged the patriarchal manners of their husbands as a way to boost their self-confidence.[205]

Different experiences of men and women are reflected in different social dynamic in these two populations. Research is available that shows the rise in male mortality from the 1960s onwards and higher suicide rates (markedly among the non-married population) as well as higher consumption rates of alcohol and more recently, non-traditional recreational drugs

[200] For discussions of Western feminist theories see for example Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002), Sandra Harding, *Whose Enlightenment? Whose Postmodernism?: Feminist Epistemologies for Rainbow Politics* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1991).
[201] Havelkova, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p.68.
[202] Watson, "Civil Society and the Politics of Difference in Eastern Europe," p.25, emphasis in the original.
[203] Havelkova, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p.69.
[204] Watson, "Explaining rising mortality among men in Eastern Europe," p.924.
[205] Havelkova, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts."

by men as compared to women.[206] Such tendencies are argued to be primarily caused by "psychosocial factors" such as the ones elaborated on above.[207] They also translated into different experiences by men and women after the collapse of socialism. The "learned resourcefulness" of women became particularly important for survival during the difficult period of social and economic collapse of the early 1990s.

After the collapse of socialism, both men and women were eager to re-establish themselves as free subjects in the public sphere. Notions of liberal citizenship and gender-blind equality were eagerly embraced and constructed as a common interest for all social groups. Seeing gender roles in terms of a mutually beneficial social contract, women (and men) did not see the need to think of the new social or political conditions in gendered terms. This partly explains the lack of interest in identity politics and in feminist agendas in particular. However, as the oppressive state withered away in 1989 and 1991, the gendered power structures in these societies changed along with other transformations, and thus it is likely that the gendered social contract would need to change as well. In this context, the question whether a distinct women's identity and political agenda should develop remains open to debate.

This issue has been particularly visible within the East-West dialogue on what the goals of women's activism should be – a process that has yielded as much frustration and misunderstanding as cooperation. In the words of Barbara Einhorn, "the 'myths of transition' have arisen partly from contesting notions of the position and project of feminist identities reflected in the continuing and difficult East/West feminist dialogue."[208] An account of the early East-West encounters presented below is very illustrative:[209]

> The common (to be fair, there are certainly exceptions, too!) pattern goes like this: a Western academic gets a grant for research on Eastern Europe. She uses her grant money to travel to the area and we spend hours and hours with her answering questions and providing her with data and information – sometimes making them up, as we lack basic research on such issues in our intellectual context. Then she flies herself back and nobody sees her anymore. Several months later, if we are lucky, we receive a photocopy of an article published in one of the feminist journals. I say photocopy – the one-year subscription of a Western academic journal still could represent an equivalent of one month of our incomes. And there we read a report of "our" world, full of misspelled names, misunderstood points, unconfirmed information, and rarely any insight. […] There are still many humiliating experiences of facing the ones who know

[206] M. Ellman, "The Increase in Death and Disease under "Katastroika"," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 18, no. 4 (1994), Murray Feshbach, "Ukraine: Health Problems and Priorities in a Regional Perspective," (USAID, 1995).
[207] Watson, "Explaining Rising Mortality Among Men in Eastern Europe."
[208] Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5, no. 2 (2003): p.165.
[209] Some publications by Eastern European women reflect the tensions in this dialogue. See, for example, Slavenka Drakulic, "What We Learned From Western Feminists," *Transitions* 5, no. 1 (1998), Mira Marody, "Why I am not a feminist," *Social Research* 60, no. 4 (1993), Jirina Siklova, "Why We Resist Western-Style Feminism?," *Transitions* 5, no. 1 (1998)..

> more and have more. Or who present themselves as knowing and having such.[210]

To add another side to this story it is worth mentioning that this particular account itself was published in the leading Western feminist journal *Signs* as early as 1995. Yet, it highlights the fact that the way a particular dialogue constructs the relative positions of those interacting is as important as what they are interacting about. My own findings presented in chapters four to seven provide a detailed account of such interactions characterized by unequal power relations not only between the "East" and the "West" but also between different women in the "East".

Indeed, tensions around understanding the meaning and priorities of women's activism in post-socialist countries were and still are a constant feature of East-West debate in academic, activist, and policy circles. One of the key problems in the early 1990s was an obvious lack of information about the situation and needs of women in the former socialist block, which had been perpetuated by decades of Cold War. In a sharp phrase by Czech dissident Jirina Šiklová: "Western observers suffer from a mixture of insights and illusions about women's emancipation in our region."[211] Early east-west contacts were marked by much disagreement and misunderstanding. In the early 1990s a Russian activist described the dialogue in the following terms:

> Mutual understanding between Russian and Western women ends where discussion of the women's movement begins. To put it somewhat bluntly, Soviet women are convinced that Western women have no problems and therefore they participate in the women's movement, while Western women are bewildered that Soviet women have so many problems, but no movement.[212]

Lissyutkina goes on to enumerate some of the many points of disagreement between Eastern and Western feminism, all of which have to do with the fact that women's problems in the two environments were shaped by two different political and economic systems.

The core point of disagreement has been the issue whether there has to be a specific women's agenda at all. Many prominent women-dissidents in the East saw no point in articulating a specific women's agenda. They believed that the struggle for fundamental societal change should be prioritized, whereas women's issues could be addressed later on. In the words of a famous Soviet dissident, Elena Bonner: "You know, our country is on such a low socio-economic level, that at the moment we cannot afford to divide ourselves into 'us women' and 'us men'. We share the common struggle for democracy, a struggle to feed the

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[210] Jirina Smejkalova-Strickland, "'Revival? Gender Studies in the 'Other' Europe," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 4 (1995): p.1001.

[211] Jirina Siklova, "Are Women in Central and Eastern Europe Conservative?," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), p.74.

[212] Larissa Lissyutkina, "Soviet Women at the Crossroads of Perestroika," in *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (New York, London: Routledge, 1993), p.274.

country."[213] Hana Havelková provides a good summary of the main arguments why women in post-communist countries did not feel any considerable urge to articulate women's issues in a manner recognizable to their Western counterparts:

> The lack of interest in women's problems originates in the syndrome of putting general human problems above particular issues of sex-related identity, an attitude strengthened by the pre-Revolutionary political dissent, which focused on issues of political freedom. An assumption that sexual identity is natural, as well as the conviction that women's emancipation has been accomplished and that no one has really benefited from it, all discourage attention to women's issues.[214]

I would add to these attempts to understand the ambivalences of the discursive field on women's issues in post-socialism that in the Soviet Union discourses of change and emancipation, which could be utilized by an opposition, were long appropriated and institutionalized within the Soviet state discourse. To be able to oppose this appropriation one had to come up with a recognizably different frame, which would evoke the promise of real change rather than well-known propaganda. Women did not believe in "emancipation" at home as well as "women's oppression" and lack of rights in the West because they thought those were ideological constructions. In other words, being "emancipated" did not have a meaning beyond the propaganda cliché. Women were told to have been emancipated and yet they saw no improvement in their condition and, more importantly, no way to act for change. As one of the early spokeswomen from Ukraine said:

> During the last seventy years, the notion of women's emancipation formed part of a highly unpopular socialist or communist totalitarian ideology, which was, moreover, of foreign (Russian) origin. Such ideas as the communist feminism of Alexandra Kollontai, female emancipation and equality of the sexes were totally discredited by their Soviet practice, even though this equality existed on paper. Feminism and emancipation are now dirty words.[215]

In other words, feminist discourse (or at least the version of it that was introduced into initial East-West exchanges in the late 1980s and early 1990s) largely drew on discursive frames and mechanisms too similar to the socialist state-led emancipation. In order to make it successful a different frame would have to be used or at least a fair amount of translation into locally resonant notions would have to be performed.

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[213] Elena Bonner, in an interview at the University of California, Berkeley, in March 1990: "On Gorbachev" in *New York Review of Books*, 17 May 1990.
[214] Havelkova, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," p.65.
[215] Solomea Pavlychko, "Feminism in Post-Communist Ukrainian Society," in *Women in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Rosalind Marsh (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.306.

This concerns not only the issues that are discussed but also the way the relative positions of different parties to the dialogue are constructed. In an article published by the Prague Gender Studies Center Jirina Siklova writes:

> We object to some of the Western feminists' insensitive conduct towards us; as those who "already know everything" they class our arguments among "teething troubles" we will soon get over. This sometimes reminds us of the attitudes of apparatchiks or of those imparting political indoctrination.[216]

This is why, regardless of their interpretations and conclusions, many of the authors who did research on women's activism in post-1991 Russia and Ukraine report to have collected much material that shows a constant emphasis by local women on "translation", on "finding our own way." This is evident, for instance, from the following quote:

> I have thought a lot about what would it mean to be a feminist in this country, about whom we can call feminist and whom we cannot […]; for our country, I think, it is especially important that the ideal of women's emancipation has been used in ways as a façade for non-emancipation, not only for women, but also non-emancipation of men.[217]

However, this initial denial of the feminist agenda does not exhaust the range of positions on the issues of gender and women's issues that have developed over the past decade. In fact, it can be argued that a certain type of feminist consciousness is developing as a part of transformation and change in the East.

As is evident from this discussion, the East-West dialogue about the meaning of women's activism was and still is far from unproblematic and serves as a good example of the (re)negotiation of the meaning of civil society itself. Western women, especially feminists, were expecting a rise in women's organizing in post-socialist countries, for two reasons. First, this expectation was due to a belief shared by the majority of Western feminist activists[218] that the worsening of the material socio-economic conditions of women would translate into their mobilization to tackle these problems. Second, change itself was seen to create new opportunities for women's activism at home as well as for building up global alliances between women. More recently it has been argued that even if the position of women under socialism had peculiar characteristics, the rapid spread of global capitalism into these countries makes it increasingly similar to that of women elsewhere.[219] The process of change in Eastern Europe

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[216] Jirina Siklova, "McDonald's, Terminators, Coca Cola Ads - and Feminism? Imports from the West," in *Bodies of Bread and Butter: Reconfiguring Lives in the Post-Communist Czech Republic*, ed. S. Trnka (Prague: Prague Gender Studies Center, 1993), p.10.

[217] Anastasiia Posadskaya, interview quoted in Linda Racioppi and Katherine O'Sullivan See, "Organizing Women Before and After the Fall: Women's Politics in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 4 (1995): p.837.

[218] Note that feminist scholarship also contains other theoretical strands than this activist position.

[219] Jacqui True, "Expanding Markets and Marketing Gender: the Integration of the Post-Socialist Czech Republic," *Review of International Political Economy* 6, no. 3 (1999).

is marked by a transformation of the relationship between public and private spheres and, thus, the gender dimension of civil society is also likely to change in substantial ways. Gender takes on a new specifically political meaning, because it begins to matter with respect to how individuals come to be differentially included within the new political community created by democratic citizenship. Peggy Watson formulated this change in the following way: "Within liberal civil society, citizens are excluded relative to each other in a way that was impossible under Communism. It is democratization itself that brings a new, essentially divisive, political force to gender relations." The fact that gender begins to matter may in fact be seen as an illustration of the masculinism at the heart of Western democracy. [220]

As the discussion above shows, the meaning of a (gendered) identity is constituted by the contextualized meanings of private and public, as well as by the castings of power structures within and across the public and the private spheres. As the society undergoes transformative changes, so do the identities and subjectivities it contains. These transformations are made sense of on the basis of the previous experience, of aspirations for a particular kind of change, and of new experiences that cannot be accommodated within the well-known notions. My own discussion in the following chapters as well reveals this complexity around the notion of gender.

2.1.3. Women's activism pre- and post- 1991

The first wave of women's activism in Ukraine began as early as the 1860s with women struggling to obtain access to higher education. The activities of women's clubs and unions of the time, both in Naddnipryanska Ukraine (eastern and central parts), which was part of the Russian empire, and in western Ukraine, which then mostly belonged to Austria, were similar to those in other parts of Europe. After the Bolshevik revolution, however, the two regions diverged strongly: Whereas in western Ukraine many women's organizations continued functioning till World War II (they also maintained closer ties with diasporic and other European women's organizations), Soviet Ukraine denounced those organizations as bourgeois, and in their place a new revolutionary women's movement was created. The period from 1917 to 1929 in Soviet Ukraine was characterized by the proclaimed "general emancipation". Equality of men and women was an important issue for the new regime. Women's issues and women's activism were institutionalized in the 1920s in the form of the *zhenotdel* (women's department) in the Communist Party. The department was effective in passing a series of laws on marriage, abortion, and property rights for women.[221]

Stalin's rule set an end to these developments and started the so-called "invisible years" for women's issues.[222] The *zhenotdel* was abolished in 1930s, when Stalin declared that

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[220] Watson, "Civil Society and the Politics of Difference in Eastern Europe," 26-27.

[221] Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[222] Ludmila Smolyar, *Mynule Zarady Maybutnioho: Zhinochiy Rukh Naddnipryanskoi Ukrainy II Polovyny XIX - Pochatka XX st.: Storinky Istorii [Past For The Sake of the Future: Women's Movement in Naddnipryanska Ukraine of the Second Half and the XIX - Beginning of the XX Centuries: Pages of History]* (Odessa: 1998).

zhenskii vopros (the "woman question") had been successfully resolved. Instead, a new section - *zhensector* - was introduced for purely propagandistic goals. It was not before the period of the "Khrushchev's thaw" that *zhensovety* (women's councils) were created with an explicit agenda of improving the position of women as a response to the recognition that more could be done to ensure women's political and economic leadership.[223] The councils, however, remained closely directed by the Communist Party and their agenda was predicated on official ideology. An important task of these councils in the international arena was to be a mouthpiece for the supposedly emancipated Soviet women and, thus, to show that the Soviet state surpassed capitalist countries in its treatment of women. The supposed progress in the position of women was framed as another manifestation of the superior nature of the socialist state. Any social or political criticism on the real position of women was therefore inconceivable within the official discourse.

As part of his *perestroika* and *glastnost* reforms, the last Secretary General of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, authorized the establishment of the *Rada Zhinok Ukrainy* – a separate Council of Women of Ukraine in 1987, which was headed by Maria Orlyk, a long-term party functionary. "Gorbachev hoped that women would be able to help promote his policies of reforming the ruling structures, not replacing them."[224] However, as subsequent events showed, the council did not mobilize women around party lines, and many councils did not try to push for the party agenda beyond what was compulsory.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Council of Women of Ukraine as well as other formerly state-organized women's organizations redefined themselves as independent organizations as soon as it was possible for them to do so. The *Rada Zhinok Ukrainy* renamed itself into the *Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy* (Confederation of Women of Ukraine). Similar developments were happening in Russia, where the Soviet Women Committee re-emerged as the Union of Women of Russia. *Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy* redefined its goals as attaining equality between men and women; protecting women from negative consequences of economic transition; and promoting the establishment and development of women's small businesses. It opened its own enterprise, *Kalina*, and regularly conducted professional trainings for women. Many former *zhensovety* continued their work on similar social agendas: They organized around providing support for the handicapped, working with children from disadvantaged families and orphans, or running soup kitchens for the homeless, for example.

An important feature of organizations like *Spilka Zhinok Ukrainy*, which is often overlooked by pro-Western feminist researchers, is the considerable amount of local expertise, activist experience, and human resources that they possess. The Soviet Women's Committee, for example, had a long record of advocating peace as a women's issue at international fora and maintained extensive links with international women's organizations. Their active members developed an identity of high profile activists explicitly oriented towards mainstream

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[223] Mary Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union* (Hammondworth: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1989).
[224] Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990-1998," in *Ukraine: The Search For a National Identity*, ed. Sharon L. Wolchik and Volodymyr Zviglyanich (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000), p.266.

politics. This is partly an explanation for the fact that women's organizations that grew from those long-standing official structures are now showing clear concern with nationwide activism and are relatively successful at making their voice heard in mainstream politics. Already during the Gorbachev years towards the end of the Soviet era, the Soviet Women Committee was awarded seventy-five seats in the Congress of People's Deputies.[225] It continued by organizing a political block, "Women of Russia", that managed to elect twenty-one women to the State Duma (Russian Parliament) in the election of December 1993.

The "wind of change" in the late 80s also brought about new oppositional movements, of which the popular front *Rukh* (Movement) in Ukraine is one prominent example. A women's group, *Zhinocha Hromada* (Women's Community), headed by a prominent dissident, Maria Drach, emerged from within this movement; in the fall of 1992 it became an independent organization with a broad grass-roots base in Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and in Eastern Europe. One of its main emphases is on state policies that would improve the welfare of children. It clearly sees itself as keeping alive the traditions of Ukrainian women's organizations of both pre-1914 and pre-1939 vintage. Remarkably, it also serves as an umbrella organization for women's organizations of ethnic minorities in Ukraine (such as Jewish, Tatar, or Korean women).[226]

Around the same time, independent women's groups were being formed in small towns across Western Ukraine. By January 1992 representatives of the branches of the independent Women's Union *Soiuz Ukrainok*, headed by Athena Pashko, wife of prominent opposition leader and presidential candidate Viacheslav Chornovil, convened in Kiyv to claim to be "the heir to the democratic traditions of the Women's Union that functioned in Ukraine since 1917 and had been liquidated as the result of Bolshevik occupation."[227] The Women's Union of Ukraine, which was recognized by the International Council of Women, existed during the period of the Ukrainian National Republic (formed in 1917); after the Bolsheviks came to power in Ukraine it continued its activities in exile in the 1920s.[228] Then the organization's primary focus was on the revival of Ukrainian cultural heritage and national values; they were engaged in much charity and educational work. Another influential all-Ukrainian women's organization that works to promote Ukrainian culture, traditions, and

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[225] Racioppi and See, "Organizing Women Before and After the Fall: Women's Politics in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia."

[226] Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990-1998."

[227] From the by-laws of *Soiuz Ukrainok*, quoted in Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power" (paper presented at the Eastern European Perceptions and Perspectives: J.B. Rudnyckyj Distinguished Lecture Series, University of Manitoba, Department of German and Slavic Studies, 1997).

[228] See Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves: Women In Ukrainian Community Life 1884-1939* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1988). Pre-World War II Ukrainian women's community organizations are argued to be manifestations of "unconscious" feminism, in the sense that although women's activities were not conceptualised as such they were essentially feminist – an approach Martha Bohachevsky-Chomiak defines as "pragmatic feminism". She attributes high cultural and political value to those community organizations. Giving a new twist to communitarian literature by connecting it to issues of nationalism and statehood, the author argues that for Ukrainian society of the time community organizations played a bigger role than state organizations. This leads her to conclude that the Ukrainian history itself is devoid of a traditional state bias that sees the state as an ultimate stage of political history.

history is *Olena Teliha Society*. There are also other ethnic women's groups that work to promote their indigenous cultures such as *Rumunski Pani* (Romanian Ladies) in Chernivtsi, the Jewish women's community *Myloserdya* (Compassion) in Kiyv, or the League of Crimean Tatar Women in Simferopol, among others.

One of the first and most impressive instances of independent women's mobilization in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a movement that mobilized in response to the abuses in the army as well as recruitment and deployment rules. Mothers of draftees became the first effective nation-wide pressure group called *Komitet Soldatskykh Materiv* (the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers). In addition to the abuses by the higher-rank commanders, which persist in the army to the present day, there was a growing concern about the rules according to which soldiers were serving in Soviet republics other than their own or could even be sent directly to war. In the times of the disastrous war in Afghanistan this meant that teenage boys without any military experience were sent directly to the frontlines; in Russia this problem persists to the present day with the on-going Chechen war. In Ukraine public uproar also grew over the fact that recruits were used to clean up the nuclear waste after the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986.

The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers first organized in Moscow and held its first mass demonstrations there in 1989. In September 1990 the Committee held its first All-Union Congress in Moscow, demanding of Gorbachev to create a Presidential Inquiry Commission to investigate the abuses in the army. Despite the unprecedented nature of this protest, achievements were moderate. It was not before November that Gorbachev authorized a commission with limited competence, making sure not to undermine the authority of the military. Out of 107 cases investigated it was only in four that the commission was able to prove that the real cause of death of the recruits was mistreatment by superiors. This became a sobering experience for the Ukrainian faction of the movement, and some argued that it was the disillusionment with the All-Union army response that motivated those women, led by Liudmyla Trukhmanova and Valentyna Artamonova, to express their support for Ukrainian independence and an independent Ukrainian army. The Ukrainian faction of the Committee held its mass rally in Zaporizhzhia in August 1991, within days of the proclamation of Ukrainian independence on August 24, 1991.[229]

Although not having any strong affinities with nationalist groups, these women reasoned that it would be easier to pressure the Ukrainian national army than that of the whole Soviet Union. Even more importantly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union would mean the end of imperialistic wars that were taking so many lives. In the words of one of the women activists: "We mothers finally realized that the Soviet Union is such a huge state that such atrocious actions could take place and it would be impossible to prove anything… and so we began the struggle for our independent state and for our army."[230]

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[229] Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990-1998."

[230] Artamonova, August 1992, interview quoted in Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power"..

Concern with the welfare of children and families due to the difficult socio-economic situation, environmental problems, and the deteriorating health care system was behind a variety of self-help groups and organizations that focused on social issues. Issues of child protection were forcefully being put on the agenda of many smaller groups, which began forming Associations of Mothers of Large Families throughout the Newly Independent States. In Ukraine such an Association was officially formed in 1993; by 1996 it had 25 local chapters around the country.[231]

Mobilization of women across the country culminated in a major political demonstration with an explicitly political agenda. Held in Kiev on the International Women's Day, the 8th of March 1991, it brought together the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the Union of Women of Ukraine, the newly formed Committee of Families with Many Children, an umbrella organization for associations of mothers with more than five children, and "Mama – 86", a group of mothers whose children had been born around the time of Chernobyl.

Most of these early initiatives had an explicitly maternalist focus; values of motherhood and child protection proved to be the most productive frame for women's mobilization at the time. These were effectively tied into the then powerful nationalist discourse of Ukrainian revival, even though this should not be seen as a purely strategic choice of framing and agenda-setting. I would argue that particular formulations of women's issues that developed at the time reflect a complex interplay between different discourses and subjectivities constructed within them. Strategic or not, however, this connection clearly rubbed the wrong way with many Western feminist observers, for whom the frame resonated with a "backward" and "traditionalist" period that preceded the "real" emancipation of women in the West. Women's protests of the time were described with a measure of condescension, if not pity, as immature, almost expressions of "false consciousness". For example, Marta Bohachevsky-Chomiak writes: "In the euphoria of the days of the collapse of the USSR the organizations of women that emerged often *returned* to the rhetoric of the nineteenth century of the woman as the keeper of the hearth, the solace of the heart, the giver of life, the guardian of children."[232]

From this arises a certain ambivalence that is evident in the literature on how to categorize different women's groups. Women's activism in the former Soviet Union is often described as an opposition between the "old" or "traditional" women's groups and the "new" women's groups - groups and organizations that were formed as a result of post-1991 interactions with Western counterparts.[233] "New" women's organizations had no ties to ex-Soviet structures nor were they connected to the nationalist project. This way of classifying

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[231] Women's Information Consultative Center, *Directory of Women's Organizations and Initiatives in Ukraine* (Kiev: Women's Information Consultative Center, 1996).

[232] Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power".

[233] To name just a few: Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine, 1990-1998.", Bohachevsky-Chomiak, "Women's Organizations in Independent Ukraine: Prospect of Power", Alexandra Hrycak, "From Mothers' Rights to Equal Rights: Post-Soviet Grassroots Women's Associations," in *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*, ed. Nancy A. Naples and Manisha Desai (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

women's groups reflects a general ideological bias in the West, which defines civil society as an inherently "apolitical" concept. It is seen as a sphere that cuts across and goes beyond traditional political cleavages, hence its apparent popularity both on the left and on the right. Such accounts also tend to undervalue women's mobilization that occurred on the basis of "regressive" traditional roles or that originated in Soviet organizational structures. These are, however, the cleavages that are constructed by Western observers rather than local women themselves. According to my own findings, which I discuss in greater detail in the following chapters, the cleavages between local women's organizations are more often of a material rather than an ideological kind. Ukrainian women-activists are particularly concerned about different degrees of access to material and symbolic resources and to emerging power networks – these often cut across ideological positions of different women's organizations.

Identifying different types of women's organizations and classifying them is far from a straightforward endeavor. Some attempts have been made but they seem to draw on blurred and ad hoc criteria, which is understandable given the short history and lack of institutionalization of the organizations that are being described.[234] It is not my intention to rectify this by suggesting a better classification or providing a detailed account of women's organizations in Ukraine; rather I offer an overview of general tendencies in women's activism and account for changes that are taking place. Most importantly, I reflect on tensions and problematic aspects within these developments. Similarly to the dynamic I described for NGOs in general, the peak in the formal registration of women's organizations occurred around the mid-1990s, partly as a result of preparation for and of the after-effects of the Forth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In recent years, the overall growth of women's NGOs has subsided: "There's a sort of a crisis now. There are fewer grants and there are no more new organizations."[235] The projects implemented by women's NGOs are more thematically focused and there are fewer differences between "old" and "new" organizations in terms of their activities and engagement with the donors. The NGOs sector seems to be moving towards more homogenization.

The interaction between local women's groups and their Western (often feminist) counterparts – Western women who came to work in the Newly Independent States in the early 1990s - has proven highly important for the institutionalization of certain forms of women's activism. Following the influential work by Keck and Sikkink discussed in chapter one, some scholars suggest calling them "feminist moral entrepreneurs" - a group of women who see their goal in building organizations and discourses that have moral implications . Undoubtedly, these women have played an important role in the making of "new" women's activism. A major institutional outcome of this interaction was the US-NIS Women's Consortium, a large umbrella organization that connected women's groups all over the former Soviet Union, American women's NGOs, and, most importantly, major donors such as the

[234] See for example Ludmila Smolyar, "The Women's Movement as a Factor of Gender Equality and Democracy in Ukrainian Society," in *Ukrainian Women's Non-profit Organizations: Directory*, ed. Oleksander Sydorenko (Kyiv: Innovation and Development Center, 2001).
[235] Bodnarovska, April 1 2003, interview by the author.

Eurasia Foundation and USAID. The idea of founding a consortium between women's organizations in the former Soviet Union and women's NGOs in the US came about around the time some American women activists and development professionals came to Moscow to participate in conferences on "transition" and the role of women. Their travel was largely supported by USAID and the McArthur Foundation, as well as some other donors eager to develop a cohort of experts on the region with field experience. Many had a background in the peace and Green movements; others were career people from the field of development. A woman that played a pivotal role in networking with the Russians and lobbying for a common project on the Hill was Elise Fiber Smith.[236] On the Russian side the key person was Elena Ershova, who had a background in US studies with a specialization in mass movements and social protests; on the Ukrainian side it was Olena Suslova, formerly a member of *Soiuz Ukrainok*.

Although initially Moscow-based, the Russian and Ukrainian part of the Consortium split into two around 1995, partly due to the pressure for independence of the part of its Ukrainian members. In 1996, under the leadership of Ershova, a not-for-profit Consortium of non-governmental women's associations was officially registered in Russia.[237] At the same time USAID funded a West-NIS Women's Consortium that included organizations in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. This latter grant was largely biased towards Ukrainian organizations, which reflected the tremendous importance given to the country in all of USAID's assistance projects for the region.

At early stages the activities of the Consortium were largely aimed at training women in technical skills pertaining to fund-raising and running an NGO. This was unanimously pushed for by the Western and the local sides.[238] The idea was to teach women how to write projects that would be acceptable by any western donor (e.g. drawing on application guidelines from the Global Fund for Women). Russians and Ukrainians were eager to embrace this knowledge as well. According to Sperling, Ferree, and Risman, who studied the Russian side of the Consortium, "technology transfer rather than promoting a particular set of projects", that is an emphasis on skills rather than agendas, came out of the seminars in different parts of Russia and was pushed for by Russians.[239]

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[236] Elise Fiber Smith has had a long career promoting the basic rights of women across the globe. At the time of the conference she was the founder and director of the Global Women's Leadership Program at Winrock International, which started in 1989 with the creation and establishment of the Pan-African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment Initiative. Prior to that she had extensive experience with Overseas Education Fund International in the field of women in development, leadership, legal rights and small business development. She is currently a member of the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign AID (ACVFA) that provides guidance to the Administrator of AID and the State Department's Advisory Committee on US International Economic Policy.

[237] The Consortium is a coalition of 99 women's organizations in 37 regions of Russia. It is a part of the International Network of the CIS-USA Women's Consortium, established in 1993. The Network unites over 200 women's organizations, including 30 organizations in the USA, over 100 in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, and 99 organizations in Russia.

[238] Vandenberg, August 17 2004, interview by the author.

[239] Sperling, Ferree, and Risman, "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism," p.1173.

The case study findings I present in chapters five and six support this claim. In addition, I discuss the implications of such a "technological" approach to the West-East exchanges. What is already clear from the discussion above, however, is that NGOs in the former Soviet Union form new types of more "professional" activism, provide alternative sources of income and employment, and create a new field of entrepreneurship. In the following section I take a closer look at the donors' involvement in the region and at particular characteristics of NGO development that have been identified in the literature.

2.2. Assistance: Donor Involvement and NGO Development

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, foreign assistance programs worldwide changed in many important respects, due to changing foreign policy objectives, reassessments of the past achievements, and financial imperatives.[240] Assistance was now driven by new goals and priorities as well as by the emergence of new assistance regions, among which the former Soviet block played a prominent role. In this dissertation I focus specifically on American governmental assistance administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

2.2.1. Assistance encounters

The end of Cold War unleashed unrealistically high expectations on both sides about the envisioned success of economic and political reform, and the eventual discrepancy between the verbal and the monetary support granted to countries undergoing reforms led to much subsequent disillusionment. Scholars point to the fact that the failures of assistance in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are also the result of inadequate funding.[241] The discourse of rebuilding "the other" part of Europe was organized around the metaphor of a new Marshall Plan,[242] which stood for the vision of remaking the European countries

[240] For a detailed overview please consult the following volumes: T. Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The learning curve* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion,* Karen Dawisha, ed., *The International Dimension of Post-communist Transitions in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration,* Kevin F.F. Quigley, "Lofty Goals, Modest Results: Assisting Civil Society in Eastern Europe," in *Funding Virtue: Civil Society and Democracy Promotion*, ed. Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000).

[241] Sarah Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 48, no. 3, May/June (2001): 24.

[242] The "Marshall Plan" (the Economic Recovery Program) was a plan for the reconstruction of Western European nations in the aftermath of World War II presented by the Secretary of State George Carlett Marshall in 1947. According to this plan, 17 Western European nations were to set up a program for reconstruction, while the United States was to provide financial assistance. The aid was to be channeled for food programs, repair of devastation caused by war, and economic reconstruction. The plan was aimed at two broad goals: to prevent the spread of communism in Western Europe and to stabilize the international order in a way favorable to the development of political democracy and free-market economies. The Marshall Plan was formally in operation during the period of April 1948 to December 1951 and involved 13.3 billion USD, mostly in direct grants but also in loans. It is believed to have been the most successful and the most expensive peacetime foreign policy initiative to date. It is also important in a historical sense since it paved the way for other forms of international

shattered by the cruel history of communism. The importance of this metaphor at the early stages of American assistance was extensively addressed by Wedel: "The words 'Marshall Plan' became almost a metaphor for America's role as a white knight. They carried a powerful sentimental appeal that called to mind one of America's most celebrated moments of global leadership and enlightened self-interest."[243]

The expectation was that Western assistance after 1989 would become a new "Marshall Plan" for quick and painless recovery; however, the actual structure and content of the assistance efforts were dramatically different from the actual Marshall Plan as well as from the rhetoric around it. Unlike the post-war Marshall Plan that consisted to more than 90% of grants, the post-1989 transition assistance largely consisted of technical assistance, export credits, loans and debt relief.[244] While foreign consultants placed much emphasis on providing advice and "technical assistance", assuming that after decades under communism people lacked basic knowledge, Eastern Europeans – buying into the "Marshall Plan" rhetoric - were mostly counting on receiving large sums of grant money.

According to Wedel, the progression of assistance efforts in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union went through three main stages: Triumphalism, Disillusionment, and Adjustment. The last phase manifested itself differently in different countries.[245] Although I do not use these stages for structuring my own findings, I find them helpful metaphors that grasp the interactive nature of the aid story and frame it in terms of ideas, expectations, and reactions rather than in the technical terms of resource transfer. Clearly, not everyone was triumphalist or disillusioned in the same way. Also, there were people who remained consistently skeptical or optimistic throughout the whole period. As Wedel admits herself, these phases were largely predictable outcomes of the isolation of the Cold War and the great expectations unleashed by its sudden end. This, however, does not diminish the importance of efforts to understand the exact meanings of triumph and disillusionment, as well as of more recent attempts at improvement and adjustment. This dissertation is inspired by a similar interest in how exactly the East-West assistance dialogue has evolved. However, unlike Wedel, I show that, rather than being subsequent stages, these three categories are continuously re-enacted through East-West interactions.

After the collapse of communism, the prevailing idea on both sides was that the West should serve as a model for Eastern European political, economic, and cultural revival; the "return to Europe" became a popular metaphor on both sides. An important problem was the lack of knowledge and understanding of the new assistance setting. The perceived "European-ness" of some post-communist countries masked the mistakes of assuming that the two sides

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cooperation such as the OECD and NATO. It is important because it established a certain framework of relations between the United States and the European nations. The success of the Marshall Plan inspired President Harry S. Truman to extend it to less developed countries throughout the world under the Point Four Program initiated in 1949.

[243] Janine R. Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe* (Palgrave, 2001), p.17.

[244] Tanya Narozhna, "Failed Expectations: Or What is Behind the Marshall Plan for Post-Socialist Reconstruction," *Kakanien Revisited*, no. 29.11 (2001), Melanie S. Tammen, "Aiding Eastern Europe: The Leveraged Harm Of "Leveraged Aid"," *Policy Analysis*, no. 139 (September 10) (1990).

[245] Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe.*

were speaking the same language, while in reality there was much misinterpretation and a disturbing mismatch of expectations. The "West" and the "East" did not have the same understanding of what the priorities and directions for change should be and, therefore, how this change should be assisted. Post-1989 foreign assistance programs were designed and implemented as a contribution to the long-awaited East-West dialogue and exchange, cushioned by the rhetoric of "the return to Europe" of those historically and culturally European countries that had been long separated due to an accident of history.[246] "The prevailing idea, in both East and West, was that Eastern Europe should look to the West not only for financial help and political models but also for economic strategies and cultural identity."[247] The representations as well as self-perceptions of foreign donors in terms of their interaction with the post-socialist countries were constructed as larger than technical assistance – they were framed by the discourses of integration and partnership. I largely confirm these conclusions on the basis of my own findings in chapters four to six.

However, this partnership meant that the "East" would respond to the preferences defined by the "West" and would build democracy and civil society with the tools approved by the "West". Western policy makers have been criticized for not taking into account the ways in which their support to democracy and civil society interacts with and relates to other policies pursued by governments and international organizations.[248] Assuming that democratizing countries should simply "catch up" with the model offered by assistance, the donors paid little attention to the overall political context in which this model was introduced. For example, some of the conclusions reached after a three-year collaborative research based at the Columbia University point out that,

> Fearing they might lose funding, the USAID and US-based NGOs have been reluctant to provide Congress with the information showing that communists or nationalists have in any way benefited from or been affected by democracy assistance. The evidence suggests, however, that if ideas and practices take hold, they usually do so in ways that encompass a wide spectrum of political actors with varied commitments to democratization.[249]

The contributors to this study suggest that what is highly important for democratization is a critical mass of local civic organizations and other institutions that are embedded in society firmly enough to be able to produce and push for proposals that respond to the domestic needs.

Despite of the uniformity of the "model" different post-socialist countries to which it was applied were not dealt with in the same way. Various gradations were introduced as to the

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246 Ibid.

247 Ibid., p.16.

248 Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p.24.

249 Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, eds., *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). For the report of the other findings of this project see also Sarah Mendelson and John K. Glenn, "Democracy Assistance and NGO Strategies in Post-communist Societies," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Working Papers* 8, no. February (2000).

degrees of European-ness of the new assistance recipients. The more developed "Visegrád countries"[250] were viewed as almost Western European countries that would catch up quickly, while the south-eastern European countries were not widely considered as partners or candidates for integration by foreign donors and especially the USA. Further differentiations emerged in 1991, when the former Soviet Union split up into 15 newly independent states. A new distinction was made that defined the nations with nuclear weapons and sizable deposits of natural resources – Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus – as more "developed" or more promising in terms of transition and more attractive for assistance than, for example, countries in Central Asia or the Caucasus. As Janine Wedel has argued, this could mainly be explained by geopolitical concerns of the donor countries.[251] In these differentiations between the Newly Independent States other factors played a role as well, however: from the presence of a nuclear arsenal on the territory of some states to the strong Ukrainian American and Armenian American lobbies in the US Congress and the continuing primacy of Russia. However, these differentiations have not translated into context-sensitive program designs differentiated by country. The differences between countries in the region were mainly collapsed into loose teleological categories of those countries which were "ahead" and those "lagging behind" on the road to transition. However, all the countries were firmly believed to be trotting down the same road. The Cold War idea of an evil empire as a political and socio-economic monolith that embodies everything anti-Western translated into democratization and free market programs supposedly applicable to the region as a whole. The belief was that in every previously authoritarian or totalitarian country democratization was to be observed and that the specific conditions of the regime break-up did not matter for the course of democratization. This particular vision was also important for ideas regarding whether and how civil society can be built from the outside in the "newly democratizing" countries.

The most important criticism of the assistance effort is not that it did not lead to the proclaimed results but that it did not try to develop an approach that would be relevant for the countries in question. In the words of Mendelson:

> Western NGOs should not be held accountable for the spread and the scope of political transformation or lack thereof in specific states. They should, however, be held responsible for their analysis of what is most feasible and needed in a given situation, in other words, for the strategies they use to pursue their goals.[252]

In this dissertation I go further to investigate the constitutive nature of a particular understanding and "analysis of what is most feasible" in civil society assistance to Ukraine.

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[250] Poland, Hungary, and former Czechoslovakia signed the so-called "Visegrád declaration" on coordinating their international strategies in February 1991. This was the first political agreement reached by former communist countries without the participation of the Soviet Union and, in fact, specifically with the idea of protecting those countries from interference by the USSR.

[251] Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe.*

[252] Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p.24.

2.2.2. "Effects and side-effects" of civil society assistance

One of the most striking peculiarities of the post-Cold War assistance is its enthusiasm about ideas of promoting democracy and civil society in different parts of the world, and the fact that this enthusiasm is widely shared by a variety of donors.[253] Van Rooy summarizes this enchantment with the concept of civil society in the following way: "the idea of civil society has become omnipresent because it rings most of the political, economic, and social bells."[254] Some scholars have, however, argued that the popularity of civil society in policy making circles constitutes a problem rather than presents a solution:

> The problem with the language of civil society is that it is used to explain almost everything: social disintegration in North America, the democratic surges in China, the transformation in Eastern Europe, the relative wealth of Northern Italy, the efforts to remove Moi from his Kenyan throne, and the dominance of the free market, among other things.[255]

A similar worry is expressed in the book by Howell and Pearce who point to the depoliticizing character of the "conceptual elasticity" of the concept of civil society and especially its usage in the realm of assistance.[256]

Confusion about the meaning of support to democracy and civil society was also responsible for the miscommunication between "East" and "West" after the end of Cold War. The lack of knowledge of the local setting beyond the Cold War intelligence reports and propaganda meant that the use of vague concepts was exacerbating rather than improving understanding and dialogue. This is well explained by Janine Wedel:

> At the start of the aid story, there was a gigantic disconnect between East and West – a disconnect forged by the Cold War and exacerbated by the barriers of language, culture, distance, information, and semi-closed borders […]; the disconnect lived on, even as circumstances changed after the collapse of the Berlin Wall.[257]

Below I investigate the implications of this "disconnect" for the development of civil society in the former Soviet Block.

With the collapse of the Soviet Block, donors started supporting civil society by providing grants and technical support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was believed at the outset of assistance initiatives to the former Soviet Block that no local democratic institutions were present in any form, which was of course true to a certain extent,

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[253] For an overview see Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: a critical exploration.* The study edited by Van Rooy presents some quantitative data on the civil society spending by different donors based on the OECD statistics. See Van Rooy, ed., *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The politics and promise.*

[254] Alison Van Rooy, "The Art of Strengthening Civil Society," in *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The politics and promise*, ed. Alison Van Rooy (London: Earthscan, 1998), p.196.

[255] Ibid., p.199.

[256] Howell and Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration.*

[257] Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe*, p.2.

given the nature of the previous regime. What was interesting, however, was that the absence of those democratic institutions was believed to be a sufficient proof of absence of any kind of civil society. This view seems at best limited, given that those totalitarian regimes did not collapse on their own but through considerable citizen pressure. Given such failures to acknowledge home-grown theories and practices of civil society, most donors were initially driven by the assumption that civil society had to be built afresh and reserved for themselves the privilege of defining what kind of civil society was to be built and how. Since NGOs were indeed non-existent, the success of civil society programs was, and still is, evaluated on the basis of quantitative growth of NGOs.

The interaction of women's groups in the former Soviet Union with Western donors, their extensive participation in donor-driven programs, and dependence on donor-distributed resources all have had a major effect on their development. On the basis of her extensive study of women's NGOs in Russia, Sarah Henderson concluded that despite many similarities and complicating factors, the gap between home-grown civic groups and NGOs that are mainly provided for by Western assistance agencies is disturbingly big. She shows that

> The activities, goals, and structure of groups that receive foreign assistance differ substantially from those who rely primarily on domestic funding […]. Groups that had received funding tend to reflect the post-materialist values of the donor, such as concerns for gender equity, environmentalism, or respect for human rights, rather than the survivalist, materialist bent of many organizations that rely solely on domestic sources of financial support.[258]

Henderson refers to this difference between civic groups by a "tale of two civic organizations": The one type of organizations grew out of interactions with foreign donors, whereas the other one is representative of the so-called indigenous activism. Her research provides strong empirical evidence that foreign assistance indeed matters for the development and nature of civic organizations. However, I would argue that dichotomizing the two types of organizations is dangerous due to the ease with which it allows one to put a positive and a negative label on the two "types".

The negative features and dysfunctional outcomes that some researchers found in the operations of local NGOs are seen as coming directly from the "project life" in which these NGOs exist (and by which some of them are created).[259] NGO projects tend to be devoid of mechanisms that would allow their participants to effectively learn from their failures and to incorporate those lessons in their future activities. The fact that "projects" are oriented towards reporting quantifiable results within a short-term framework constrains the range of options as to what NGOs can be meaningfully doing with the help of foreign funding.[260]

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[258] Sarah L. Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.9-10.

[259] Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania."

[260] For evidence based on ethnographic research consult the following volumes: Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia,* Hann and Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models,* Henderson, *Building*

Sarah Mendelson points to the inherent contradiction of this approach that requires "quantitative measurements of qualitative transformations" and thus builds on the wrong premise.[261] In addition, being mostly targeted at the short-term, assistance projects often do not allow Western donors and their implementing partners to go beyond a set of well-established links with a few domestic NGOs.

Another important dimension to this dialogue are the power inequalities not only between the donor and the NGO but also among different NGOs. The stronger and richer NGOs are inevitably setting the terms and the format for interaction with their counterparts. Moreover, due to their interest in the available resources, material and symbolic, smaller NGO are prepared to compromise on their own visions and missions and are likely to downplay the irrelevance of the plans of action proposed from the outside. Practically, this can create undemocratic hierarchical relationships between different NGOs (especially between transnational and local ones); it can lead to the strengthening of certain local NGOs in a way that creates boundaries and inequalities within the local civil society and supports a local NGO elite.[262]

In addition, the majority of foreign-supported NGOs are almost unanimously accused of lacking a grassroots constituency; they also fail to establish and maintain cooperative relations with other civic groups.

> Rather than building networks and developing publics, [civic] groups consciously retained small memberships, hoarded information, and engaged in uncooperative and even competitive behavior with other civic groups. In short, groups pursued individual, short-term gains rather than collective, long-term development.[263]

The divisions between groups that have established connections with the West and outsiders to this practice are very strong. Many funded groups are in competitive relations with each other since they are well aware of competing for the same pot of relatively limited resources. In her study of women's activism in Russia Valerie Sperling shows that foreign assistance has fostered internal rivalries, jealousies, and overall divisiveness among and within groups.[264] Sarah Henderson also echoes these findings:

> Many groups, *funded and unfunded*, tended to be small, relatively distrustful of others, and focused on guarding their civic turf. What was surprising, however,

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Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations, Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[261] Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," p.23.

[262] For more empirical examples from the field of transnational women's mobilization see Amrita Basu, ed., *The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), Jill Bystydzienski and Joti Sekhon, eds., *Democratization and Women's Grass-roots Movements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), Jael Silliman, "Expanding Civil Society, Shrinking Political Spaces: The Case of Women's Non-governmental Organizations," *Social Politics* 6, no. 1 (1999).

[263] Henderson, "Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and Nongovernmental Organization Sector in Russia," p.143.

[264] Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition.*

was that foreign aid was not necessarily ameliorating these problems; rather, it seemed to be exacerbating them, despite its intentions to the contrary.[265]

Scholars increasingly talk about the "ghettoized" position of NGOs in the former Soviet Union in the sense that they are closer to their donors and other transnational partners than to their government or society.[266] It is quite unclear whose interests NGOs represent and who their constituencies are. When discussing these criticisms, Sarah Henderson makes an important point by connecting these concerns to the issue of sustainability. Counter to the mainstream policy discourse that defines sustainability predominantly in monetary terms,[267] she notes that after-funding sustainability assessments of these groups should be based on their capacities to represent domestic constituencies.[268] However, being both representative of a certain constituency and sustainable still does not directly translate into democratic effects. It is therefore important to neither demonize the externally supported initiatives nor to romanticize the local ones regardless of their substance.

In addition to such findings of broad-scale effects, there is also an extensive literature showing that on an individual level aid has created new identities. A "new" generation of professionals has moved to the foreground. These people, sometimes referred to as "fixers" or brokers, became proficient in facilitating the "dialogue" between East and West or sometimes "explaining" the East to the West. Most of the time these were people who spoke good English, mastered the conventions of "Western style" communication, and knew how to get things going locally while at the same time projecting the right image of professionals to their foreign counterparts.[269] These people formed a new "civic elite" or even, as for example Sarah Henderson suggests, a "civic oligarchy".[270] Now, more than a decade into the "civil society building effort", this group has become increasingly visible - "the indigenous development professionals, an aspiring elite, who are part of the human fallout of international development aid."[271]

Some have argued that activists that received Western assistance were socialized into Western professional ways; these civic groups tend to mimic the organizational style of Western assistance agencies, which are wealthy, centralized and bureaucratized corporate NGOs.[272]

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[265] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, p.11, emphasis added.
[266] Mendelson and Glenn, eds., *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe.*
[267] See for example, USAID "Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story. Building Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States." USAID Bureau for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Office of Democracy and Governance, October 1999.
[268] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, p.13.
[269] Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania.", Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe.*
[270] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations.*
[271] Ruth Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society," in *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia*, ed. Chris Hann (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p.279.
[272] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations.*

> The most enduring effect of the aid effort so far has been the formation of a new local elite of "development professionals." The trouble is that the value produced by these people takes the form of project "deliverables" that are unlikely to have any bearing on the deteriorating living conditions of the mass of the population. Meanwhile the young professionals imbibe a set of Western values and earn Western salaries. They become unemployable in their local societies.[273]

Anthropologist Ruth Mandel echoes this observation by saying that "local people trained in the servicing of the aid industry have been rendered unsuitable to work for their own governments" due to the pay differences but also due to the fact that this new cadre has been socialized into different organizational structures with different work styles and ethics.[274] She is particularly outspoken in her dissatisfaction with the role played by this new elite: "The local development workers have become proselytes of the international development missionaries, and the rhetoric of civil society, privatization and democratization is their catechism."[275]

What comes across as somewhat ironic is that, while on the one hand donor activities are biased towards certain kinds of civic activists, donors are, on the other hand, often dissatisfied with the local people they have to work with, reporting some kind of "donor fatigue" and dissatisfaction with the delivered results.[276] Often putting the blame on Soviet legacies, they fail to see their own contribution to the consolidation of the "civic elite" they interact with. In this dissertation I will therefore pay particular attention to the mutually constitutive nature of the dialogue between the donor and the local NGO.

2.3. Conclusion

Particular configurations of the public – private realms during socialism also created particular perceptions of and attitudes towards issues of activism and gender. Moreover, current socio-political transformations engender complex changes in these attitudes and impact on people's ideas of meaningful civic action. I have argued that foreign assistance has proven to be a highly influential factor on the changing post-socialist scene, specifically with regard to its promotion of particular new forms of civil society.

The promotion of civil society in the form of NGO support has created a variety of ambiguous effects, such as financial dependency, upward accountability, and the adjustment of structures and agendas of organizations to their donors. This has led to corrupt practices within funding-eligible organizations as well as to rivalries between them and to a complete communication vacuum between donor-funded and other groups and associations. The

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[273] Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, p.277.
[274] Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society," p.287.
[275] Ibid., p.293.
[276] This is particularly visible in the analysis by Sampson, "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania."

observable massive proliferation of nongovernmental organizations is also argued to have fallen short of fulfilling the challenges of citizen empowerment and growth of alternative centers of power. On the contrary, it generates isolation and fragmentation rather than networks, communication, and pluralism.

Given a widely shared understanding of the "assistance" effort as a project that embodies a mixture of arrogant attitudes and plain ignorance of particular contexts, it seems surprising that in the real world of civil society assistance alternatives are not being introduced. Despite years of experience in different contexts around the globe and a whole range of failures that are recognized by the donors themselves, we still do not see those more modest and reasonable scenarios introduced. Coming back to the questions posed in the beginning of this book, it remains unclear why, given such a range of negative effects, donor practices persist rather than being abandoned altogether. Some researchers argue that "it is not aid in and of itself that is flawed but the way, in which it is designed and implemented."[277] This is a convenient and largely commonsensical way to make an argument; however, it does not provide any tools for effectively separating the chaff of bad design from the wheat of good intention. I suggest retaining a degree of skepticism about the extent to which such a separation is actually possible. I argue that "good intentions" do not exist in and of themselves; instead, the intentions as well as the design and implementation of the projects they motivate are constituted by a particular discourse. Therefore, in order to understand how certain tendencies created by the assistance effort came about and to be able to judge the potential for reversing them, it is important to identify the particular discursive mechanisms that sustain them.

[277] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations*, p.170.

Chapter 3: Dialogical Discourse Analysis

During my fieldwork in one Ukrainian city I went to interview the head of a women's NGO. The NGO was based in her flat and when I entered, I discovered a living room, in which among the usual furniture and some personal things a computer and a fax machine stood. What was the meaning of those objects? They were there not as mere signs of an increasing use of modern technology by the Ukrainian population but had been purchased with a grant that was – according to the donor's definition – part of the "technical assistance to promote democracy in Ukraine." For the head of the NGO herself, these objects were an integral part of creating an NGO. Such an understanding of a computer and a fax machine in somebody's living room was not obvious. However, if an official from the donor agency that provided such "assistance" had come to visit in order to see how it "was promoting democracy in Ukraine", he or she would not have been surprised to see a computer and a fax machine. He or she would not have been expecting to find a peaceful demonstration of human rights activists in that living room as a sign of "democracy in Ukraine". To him or her a computer and a fax machine would have made sense.

It is these kinds of observations that lead me to argue that things do not just make sense as such; they are *made* to make sense. The goal of this dissertation is to look into how exactly that is made possible. Misplaced names, foreign words, clumsy phrases, unintelligible adaptations of English words in written and spoken Russian and Ukrainian are not just alien creatures flown in by foreign guests. They are also actively employed by local actors to make sense of new and old realities and, in fact, to (re)enact realities. Below I elaborate on a theoretical perspective and a research model that allow me to conceptualize civil society assistance as a discourse that is (re)enacted through interactions between foreign donors and Ukrainian NGOs.

3.1. A Genealogy of Discourse Theories

Discourse theory belongs to a set of theories which has emerged as an acknowledgement of and an attempt to overcome limitations of mainstream positivist approaches to social science primarily by grounding itself on different ontological and epistemological foundations. It emphasizes the inherent ambiguity of social and political phenomena and provides a context-

dependent, historicist, and non-objectivist framework for analyzing society.[278] In the words of Maarten Hajer:

> This tradition has an anti-essentialist ontology; it assumes the existence of multiple, socially constructed realities instead of a single reality, governed by immutable natural laws. Characteristically, the approach takes a critical stance towards "truth" and puts emphasis on the communications through which knowledge is exchanged.[279]

Discourse theory is positioned against theories and methodologies that - in a manner characteristic of natural sciences - define their goal as "to explain phenomena and events in objective universal terms."[280] These theories are based on a particular understanding of knowledge as a value-free search for empirical confirmation of causal accounts with the highest possible degree of generalizability. This approach rests on several key assumptions, such as the distinction between discovery and validation, belief in the possibility of neutral observation and in the neutrality of the language that frames this observation, and a value-free conception of scientific knowledge (i.e. a rigid separation between facts and values).[281] Science is therefore seen as aimed at the production of falsifiable laws and theories, and results of social science inquiry are meant to be utilized for predicting comparable or future events. This approach characterizes schools of thought such as logical positivism, behavioralism, and certain forms of structural functionalism, (critical) realism and Marxism.[282] Discourse theory, on the other hand, "is concerned with understanding and interpreting socially produced meanings rather than searching for objective causal explanations."[283] These socially produced meanings (or systems of meanings) are seen as both constituted by social practices and ideas in political life and constitutive of political activities in that they enable certain forms of social and political action and constrain others. In other words and applied to this dissertation, there would be no civil society specialists and centers within the donor agencies without the civil society discourse; at the same time, these institutional components influence the development of civil society discourse.

Some ideas defining the discourse analytical paradigm are argued to be already found in the transcendental turn in Western philosophy, in particular in Kant and Hüsserl, in the sense that this turn shifted the focus of inquiry from concrete facts to their conditions of possibility. Unlike transcendentalists, though, discourse theorists see those conditions as context-dependent and variable.[284] Critiques of structuralism[285] and interpretative sciences such

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[278] David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham: Oxford University Press, 2000), Jacob Torfing, *New theories of discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).
[279] Maarten Hajer and Wytske Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievement, Challenges, Perspectives," *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7, no. 3 (2005): p.176.
[280] Howarth, *Discourse*, p.126.
[281] Brian Fay, *Social Theory and Political Practice* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1975), p.13.
[282] G. Delanty, *Social Science: Beyond Constructivism and Realism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997).
[283] Howarth, *Discourse.*
[284] Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, p.84.

as hermeneutics, phenomenology, and deconstructivism, which interpret texts and analyze how objects and experiences acquire meaning, have had a major impact on the development of discourse theory.[286] The so-called "linguistic turn" produced a major shift in the social sciences that implied moving from looking at language as a neutral medium, which conveys pre-existing meanings, to looking at language as a social phenomenon in itself. Since then discourse theory in the social sciences has become more rigid but also more diversified.

Analyzing discourse means asking "how the discourses, which structure the activities of social agents, are *produced*, how they *function*, and how they are *changed*."[287] The main preoccupation of discourse analysis is the study of production of meaning in different historical contexts, which is seen as a prerequisite for all forms of social and political behavior. According to Hajer, "Discourse analysis has three particular strengths; the capacity to reveal the role of language in politics, to reveal the embeddedness of language in practice and to illuminate mechanisms, and answer 'how questions'."[288]

Different structures of meanings make possible different forms of conduct. For example, in the case of the post-1989 development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe it has been widely argued that foreign aid agencies play a key role in determining the nature of newly emerging NGOs. The discourse analytic contribution to the study of this process is the analysis of how the interaction between NGOs and their donors constructs and contests different systems of meaning, which enable or constrain different activities of NGOs as well as donors themselves.

Most often (if in a slightly confusing turn) systems of meaning have been called "discourses", which can be defined as

> a relational totality of signifying sequences that together constitute a more or less coherent framework for what can be said and done. The notion of discourse cuts across the distinction between thought and reality […]; it does not merely designate a linguistic region within the social, but is rather co-extensive with the social.[289]

These "totalities of signifying sequences" have also been referred to as genres - "the aggregates of means of collective orientation in reality"[290] - or as discursive formations – regular bodies of ideas and concepts, which claim to produce knowledge about the world.[291] In this dissertation I use the definition of "discourse" that has been developed in the work of Maarten Hajer: "Discourse is defined as an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories

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285 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London, New York: Verso, 1985).
286 Howarth, *Discourse*, p.115.
287 David Howarth, "Discourse Theory," in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (London: Macmillan Press, 1995), p.115, emphasis in the original.
288 Hajer and Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievement, Challenges, Perspectives," p.176.
289 Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, p.300.
290 Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*.
291 Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text*, ed. R. Young (1971).

through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices."[292]

A number of studies have shown how ideas and notions combine and blend in seemingly coherent structures labeled "interpretative repertoires"[293] or narratives and story-lines, which have significant social and political implications. Story-lines or narratives combine elements of various ideas and lines of argumentation into a seemingly coherent whole and, thus, conceal discursive complexity. Furthermore, they can themselves subsequently become a political reality in their own right and then stand in the way of more reflexive institutional change. [294] It is for this reason that it is vital to study how meanings are produced, function and change (or are possibly contested and subverted).

Acknowledging that meaning is not a pre-given quality of a phenomenon but is rather ascribed to it allows one to problematize processes of defining, categorizing, and framing the social. Meanings constitute identities and strategies of actors as well as public access to and understanding of the problem at hand, and problem selection and analysis. For example, the presence of massive numbers of predominantly female undocumented workers in countries of the European Union can be interpreted as a "trafficking" problem rather than as an illegal migration problem.[295] This shift in meaning has implications for how alien women are represented, i.e. as victims or as criminals, for opinions about these women held by the wider public locally and internationally, as well as for what measures are being enforced to "deal" with these women.

However, it is important not to mistake the totalizing nature of such structures of meaning for their universality. The fact that a system of meanings has gained dominance over the discursive field does not make it the "true" system of meaning. It is the inherently dialogic nature of language that provides for constant (if at times less prominent) contestation of meanings. It is even more important to highlight that such structures of meaning or discourses are not only multiple but are also in constant interaction with each other. Therefore, the discourse paradigm questions the idea of a structure on two key assumptions: the possibilities of a fixed center and of finite closure. Unlike the structuralist assumption that a fixed center exercises a universal power of structuration and signification, the discourse paradigm sees structures as contingent and plays of meanings as infinite and dynamic. It therefore offers new understandings of such traditional social science oppositions as structure and agency, or center

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[292] Maarten Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.44.

[293] See, for example, Michael Billig, "Discursive, Rhetorical and Ideological Messages," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherel, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon.J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, 2001), Margaret Wetherell, "Themes in Discourse Research: The Case of Diana," in *Discourse Theory and Practice*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon.J. Yates (London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli: Sage Publications, 2001), Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, *Mapping the language of racism: discourse and the legitimation of exploitation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

[294] Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process.*

[295] It is important to note here that the term "illegal" itself is problematic, as it belongs to a particular discourse on migration. For a more detailed discussion see Joseph Nevins, *Operation Gatekeeper: the Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (New York: Routledge, 2002)..

and periphery. In fact, it allows moving beyond these dichotomies in the sense of acknowledging their dynamism and contingency. The discourse paradigm makes it possible

> to problematize the underlying assumptions that make the two alternatives contradictory and to inscribe them within some new undecidable logic that will make room for both in such a way that neither neutralizes the opposition nor sublates it into a higher order synthesis.[296]

In the case of civil society assistance I argue that foreign assistance discourse and practice determine the conditions of possibility for the nature and content of civil society. I show in the subsequent chapters that foreign assistance defines what forms of citizen involvement qualify as civil society in Ukraine, mainly by downsizing the concept to the realm of non-profit non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and by delineating the range of activities performed by NGOs. Conceptualizing the impact of foreign assistance in these terms means redressing the discursive/extra-discursive opposition. This opposition is a product of a rigid analytical division between language (the signifier) and reality (the signified), which has dominated structuralist approaches in linguistics and the social sciences. Discourse analysis aims to overcome this opposition by asserting that social meaning is relationally constructed as a part of a discourse which cannot be reduced to a semantic region or aspect of the social totality, since it weaves together meaning and action in complex language games.[297] Language is not mirroring or expressing the "truth" or the "reality out there"; rather, it is through language that reality actually happens, subjectivities are created and expressed, social activities are developed and pursued, and power-relations are tried out and consolidated.[298] Therefore, there is no way to approach the world by-passing language and testing how the world really is on its own terms. "It follows that language can only be compared with language and not with the world directly."[299] Therefore, looking at assistance from a discourse theoretical perspective is important not because language or discourse is an important *part* of reality but because it is the *only* reality there is.

This position should, however, not be seen as a reiteration of idealist arguments in the fashion of the realism/idealism debate.[300] Seeing every object constituted as an object of discourse does not imply that there is no world external to thought; it asserts instead that every object with its specificity is always constituted as such within a discourse.[301] To come back to the example I give in the beginning of this chapter, there is no doubt that with the help of donor funding NGOs buy equipment and furniture and that these items are physically present in a rented office space or private home. But whether the specificity of these objects is

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[296] Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*, p.135.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Terrel Carver, "Discourse analysis and the linguistic turn," *European Political Science*, no. autumn (2002): p.50-51.
[299] Ibid.: p.52.
[300] For a summary of the argument and a critique see Derek Edwards, Malcolm Ashmore, and Jonathan Potter, "Death and Furniture: The Rhetoric, Politics, and Theology of Bottom Line Arguments Against Relativism," *History of the Human Sciences* 8, no. 2 (1995).
[301] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.108.

constructed in terms of "technical assistance", "creating open and free access through the Internet to Western concepts of civil society" or "strengthening the NGO sector"[302] depends on the particular discourse that is employed. Moreover, the particular meaning of these objects has implications for how and to what ends they can be utilized.

To put it differently, discourse theory does not deny that objects have extra-discursive existence but it does contest the possibility of their having an extra-discursive meaning. This approach also has implications for questions of knowledge production, firstly, since theoretical objects are never understood as given by the world of experience and facts but as constructed in historically specific systems of knowledge.[303] Secondly, "decisions about the truth and falsity of statements are settled within orders of discourse (or paradigms) using criteria established by those orders themselves."[304] The orders of discourse are, therefore, neither true nor false in themselves. In the words of Foucault, "the political question […] is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is truth itself."[305]

A social scientist and her writings also exist within discursive structures and conceptual frameworks which are politically and historically defined. "In the social science […] both the researchers and their objects of research are meaningful practices and social constructions."[306] There is no "god trick" or objective(fying) gaze from nowhere a scientist could perform in order to narrate the world as it is.[307] In other words, there is no "objective" scientific vision that is not embodied in a particular scientific subject and practice. The illusion of the "god trick" implies the power to represent without being represented and has been severely criticized as an underlying principle of racism, sexism, colonialism, eurocentrism and many other extreme "isms". As has been made evident by a number of scholars, scientific objectivity is contingent in itself as it can only come from a partiality of perspective and not from transcendence, just as vision always comes with particular ways of seeing.[308] "Objectivity" therefore comes from a critical positioning of the knower within discursive formations rather than from assuming it inherent in scientific expertise. "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object."[309] Similar epistemological claims have been put forth in science and technology studies,[310] which call for acknowledging that knowledge and the boundaries of science are all implicated in historically specific power structures.

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302 The examples are taken from USAID. "Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story. Building Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States." USAID Bureau for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Office of Democracy and Governance, October 1999.
303 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), p.44-45.
304 Howarth, *Discourse*, p.133.
305 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77* (New York:: Harvester Press, 1980), p.133.
306 Howarth, *Discourse*, p.128.
307 D. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 1988.
308 This argument is particularly well developed in the work of feminist scholars, for example Ibid, S. Harding, ed., *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues, Bloomington* (IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).
309 Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective."
310 Bruno Latour, Michael Mulkay

Due to its potential to go beyond such dominant notions as objectivity, structure, and materialism, discourse theory opens up possibilities for working out and applying different analytical tools for studying society. "The main consequence of a break with the discursive / extra-discursive dichotomy is the abandonment of the thought / reality opposition, and hence a major enlargement of the field of those categories which can account for social relations."[311] Having clarified the kinds of questions that can be asked with the help of discourse analysis, the next step has to be taken, namely identifying the appropriate ways of answering them. In what follows I offer some tools that can be used for delineating a discourse, identifying the key elements on which it is based, and explaining how a certain discourse sustains itself given the multiple and constantly changing nature of social reality. I adopt a methodological framework that is based on the work of the Russian/Soviet philosopher of language and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin.[312]

In the next section I outline in greater detail the theoretical apparatus of a discourse theory that was worked out within the Bakhtinian school, which emerged in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and was developed mainly in the texts of Makhail Bakhtin himself through to the 1960s. The latter, though primarily focused on the study of a novelistic genre, introduce notions of dialogism or dialogicality (*dialogichnost*) as a key quality of discourse and seek to explain the tensions and changes within and across discourses by means of a model that introduces an interplay of centripetal and centrifugal discursive forces.

3.2. Dialogical Discourse Analysis: Mikhail Bakhtin

3.2.1. Bakhtinian theories

> Even the driest and flattest positivism […] cannot treat the word neutrally, as if it were a thing, but is obliged to initiate talk not only about words but in words, in order to penetrate their ideological meanings – which can only be grasped dialogically, and which include evaluation and response.[313]

[311] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.110.

[312] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1971) has gained credit as a distinguished scholar posthumously, his major works having only recently been translated into many languages. Due to the turbulent events of his time, some of Bakhtin's writings have been either lost or only recently discovered and published for the first time. His most productive years coincided with the post-October revolution (1917) chaos of civil war and famine, Stalinist purges, World War II and German occupation. Mikhail Bakhtin spent most of his professional life in provincial obscurity. His was a historical period particularly difficult for scholarly and creative work, as the state ideology had been gradually overtaking all spheres of life. A so-called Bakhtinian circle was a tradition of meetings for discussions on most current topics of philosophy and aesthetics that Bakhtin and other intellectuals of his time maintained in several cities (St. Petersburg, Vitebsk, and Moscow).

[313] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.352.

The theoretical heritage of Mikhail Bakhtin is an interesting strand of discourse theory, which is at times unjustly neglected in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. It is particularly fascinating that many of his ideas preceded the better-known post-structuralist theories of discourse that developed in continental Europe in the second half of the twentieth century (of which "archaeology", "genealogy" and "problematization" by Michel Foucault are the best known landmark examples). Having developed at a different time period and in a drastically different environment, Bakhtinian ideas, although building on similar epistemological grounds, took a somewhat different direction and offered different solutions to understanding the discursivity of the social and the political. In the context of this dissertation I find it particularly appealing that Bakhtin was developing his ideas in the same context that shaped the identities of many civil society scholars and activists who are currently involved in the institutionalization of civil society in Ukraine. Although the context of my research is a rapidly changing one, such cultural affinity of ideas can be of tremendous help for understanding these processes as they unfold under the dual influence of historical legacies and new interactions.

Key in this respect is a different understanding of the political and especially of the power/resistance nexus. While in Western Europe conceptualizations of power were fundamentally influenced by the Marxist tradition (if not in their continuity, then in their point of departure), "East of the Elbe" Marxism became so firmly institutionalized within the oppressive power structures that instead of entering into a dialogue with it, however critical, thinkers of different backgrounds were often trying to conceive of fundamentally different analytical grounds. Bakhtin's work represents a prominent example of such intellectual efforts. In this section I outline his main ideas concerning discourse and its workings.

The importance of Bakhtinian texts (including those by Voloshinov and Medvedev)[314] lies in their basic ideas about the socially implicated and interactive nature of language, which undoubtedly represent an early "social turn" in linguistics. The counterpoint of these texts are Saussurean structuralist linguistics, namely the structuralist dichotomy of language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*). Bakhtinians maintain that "the meanings of words are derived not from fixed relationships between abstract signs but from the accumulated dynamic social use of particular forms of language in different contexts and for different and sometimes conflicting purposes."[315]

Writing contra Ferdinand de Saussure, Bakhtin defined language not as a system of signs but as meaning constructed in interaction.[316] Material reality and everyday practice is constantly reconstructed and renegotiated in interaction, meaning-making being key to

[314] There is some controversy over the authorship of the texts produced within the Bakhtinian circle. This mainly concerns the authorship of three books: *Freudianism* (1927) and *Marxism and Philosophy of Language* (1929) by V.N. Voloshinov and *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928) by P.N. Medvedev. Both authors were very close to Bakhtin and shared many of his ideas. Although Voloshinov and Medvedev produced many other interesting writings indisputably of their own, Bakhtinian experts often argue that these books were actually written or dictated by Bakhtin. This copyright issue has never been resolved legally.

[315] Janet Maybin, "Language, Struggle and Voice: The Bakhtin/Volosinov Writings," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon.J. Yates (London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli: Sage Publications, 2001), p.65.

[316] A dialogue between two people at a particular time and place, each being constrained by the discursive choices s/he makes (when somebody is talking to somebody else even if to oneself in one's thoughts).

everyday life. This allowed Bakhtin to move away from a more hierarchical and systemic picture that conceives of language as a composition of different unit levels to looking at socially embedded *interactive phenomena*. "Discourse[317] is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning."[318]

Bakhtin complicates the understanding of language as a socially implicated system of meanings by introducing the concept of *dialogichnost* (dialogism or dialogicality) and explaining the dynamics of meaning that this creates. Dialogicality in Bakhtinian terms means that a word cannot be viewed as an independent entity because every word or utterance exists in relation to and in a constant dialogue with other words and utterances. Every word consists of a multiplicity of people's voices as well as of the social practices and contexts they evoke. For Bakhtin dynamics of meaning-making are implicit in every word (here "word" is conceived not as an abstract signifier in a Saussurean sense but as an instance in which a word is practiced, i.e. in which it is either thought, said, or written).

> Only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word could really have escaped from start to finish the dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object. Concrete historical human discourse does not have this privilege: it can deviate from such inter-orientation only on a conditional basis and only to a certain degree.[319]

Bakhtin suggests that the dialogicality that takes place in a word is multileveled in that it is not only about responding to an immediate utterance but also to the whole corpus of meanings constructed at a given period of time. A word has dialogic orientation

> first, amid others' utterances inside a single language (the primordial dialogism of discourse), then amid other "social languages" within a single national language and finally amid different national languages within the same culture, that is the same socio-ideological conceptual horizon.[320]

The dialogue is also conducted with a variety of audiences and arguments beyond the actual situation of interaction. In other words, for Bakhtin, people talking about certain objects are confronted with meanings, connotations, and social practices which have already been created, used and contested by someone else. In his words,

> … no living word relates to its object in such a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an

[317] Bakhtin himself never used the word 'discourse'; the notion of discourse entered scholarly texts at a later stage and till now remains a borrowing from English in Russian speaking scholarship; it is, however, introduced in some of the translations of his work.
[318] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.259.
[319] Ibid., p.279.
[320] Ibid., p.275.

> elastic environment of other alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that it is often difficult to penetrate… . Indeed, any concrete word (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary, by the "light" of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.[321]

This dialogical orientation of a word not only retrospectively responds to things previously said but also projects what will be said after a given utterance. Thus, every utterance is at the same time an exercise of accommodation or appropriation of other people's words and of projection of meaning, which both creates possibilities and constrains future utterances. "Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word."[322] Dialogicality is thus a result of the heteroglossic nature of reality itself. Heteroglossia is a name for the "dynamic multiplicity of voices, genres, and social languages" that characterises social order. The potential of the multiplicity of meanings, which is inherent in every word, can become realized at certain moments, when existing notions are re-appropriated to include new and sometimes conflicting meanings or when altogether new labels are created to substitute for the existing notion.

The mechanisms that pull together certain meanings at the expense of this inherent (in a sense limitless) multiplicity as well as the mechanisms that introduce alternative meanings are captured by the interplay of so-called centripetal and centrifugal forces, respectively. Centripetal forces produce authoritative, fixed, and homogenizing effects by putting together and consolidating a (dominant) discourse or a "unitary language", in Bakhtinian terms.

> Unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language. A unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited – and at every moment of linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia.[323]

Concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization develops in vital connection with processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization.[324] The "authoritative" or dominant

[321] Ibid., p.276.
[322] Ibid., p.280.
[323] Ibid., p.270.
[324] Ibid., p.271.

discourse provides a particular pure representation of power that claims to be universal but it is never the only possible representation.

Similarly to what was later argued by Foucault, the "unitary language"' (or the dominant discourse in Foucauldian terms) exercises a structuring power over subjects by creating identities and conditions of possibility for action. Understanding discourse in such a way provides us with new understandings of power. Traditionally, power was conceived of either as coercion/domination, with its alter ego - resistance (an asymmetrical relationship of power), or as consensus (strategically negotiated power). The new understanding is that power does not only originate from the "strategic game" of an actor; it also structures that game and the subjectivity of an actor in a certain way.[325] Drawing on this tradition, Hajer has argued that "creating a joint understanding of the world, developing knowledge, and following particular guidelines is power."[326]

Centrifugal forces, on the other hand, are the forces of diversification and change that work to disrupt and subvert the "unitary language". In Bakhtin's writings, centrifugal forces are represented in the "carnivalesque", i.e. practices of contesting/subverting the dominant and the official, turning things upside-down, when the bottom becomes the top and the top becomes the bottom or, in a metaphor inspired by medieval carnival culture, the fool is the king and the king is the fool. "Carnivalesque" elements emerge out of an inherent inadequacy or impotency of dominant meanings to respond to the complexity of the reality made up of multiple interactions. Centripetal and centrifugal forces are metaphors suggested by Bakhtin in his book on Rabelais[327] and medieval literature. He uses them to describe the constant "push-and-pull" effect between the structuring power of a dominant system of meanings – Bakhtin uses the term "officialdom" – and the inherent playful or, to use Bakhtin's term, "the carnivalesque" nature of language. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and dis-unification themselves intersect in an utterance.[328] Bakhtin talks about carnival practices that employ radical reversals of meaning in order to render the key principles of the power structure meaningless and to question their authority. The idea of the interplay between the "officialdom" and the "carnivalesque" complements and substantiates Foucault's postulate "where there is power, there is resistance", which was formulated but never empirically addressed by Foucault himself.

If one pursues the model suggested by Bakhtin, it becomes clear that the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces can produce moments of tension and rupture that may lead to changes in meaning. I suggest calling these moments of change *openings*. Openings

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[325] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77,* Michel Foucault, "The Subject and the Power," in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert Breyfus and Paul Rabinow (Brighton: Harvester, 1982).

[326] Hajer and Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievement, Challenges, Perspectives," p.181.

[327] Due to a political and ideological controversy around Bakhtin's major work on Rabelais, which he submitted as his doctoral dissertation in 1946-49, the presently world-renowned monograph *Rabelais and His World* had to wait nineteen years before it was first published in 1965. Some of Bakhtin's other books were also refused publication during his lifetime.

[328] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.272.

are the points at which one can see the "unitary language" disrupted. Openings are not words or utterances of a particular kind, i.e. there is no word or utterance that could be an opening per se. An opening is a discursive event,[329] in which words, speakers, contexts of word/utterance production and reception come together in a way that suggests new meanings. Accounting for openings is important since it allows pointing out alternative meanings that serve as a contrast field to the dominant discourses under study. This is an important addition to a Foucauldian type of analysis, which stays short of accounting for a simultaneous interplay of different meanings. Though being praised for his accounts of the workings of discourses and discursive formations, Foucault is often criticized for failing to systematically single out ruptures and tensions within a discourse and emergences of alternative meanings. "There is a marked absence of attention to tensions, let alone contradictions, within discourses that provide the raw material for the discourses of resistance."[330]

The idea of openings is similar to the concept of "dislocation" developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their influential work on *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.[331] "Dislocations are events that cannot be symbolized by an existent discursive order, and thus function to disrupt that order."[332] In this sense they reveal the contingency of discursive structures. Laclau and Mouffe argue that, taken further, dislocations can create new forms of identification, which are captured firstly within myths and further within social imagery. They fail, however, to pinpoint why and under what conditions this can become a possibility. I would, therefore, like to emphasize that "openings" is a descriptive notion rather than an explanatory tool. In other words, indications of alternative meanings should be analytically separated from ascribing them with transformative power. A separate question that has to be empirically and theoretically addressed remains whether the new meanings that are created in the interaction indeed have an impact on the dominant discourse to the extent of changing it or whether and under what conditions they are appropriated instead. In the next section I move on to discussing how the notions introduced so far can be applied to the study of the impact of foreign assistance on the development of civil society in Ukraine.

3.2.2. Applying Bakhtinian theory to the study of donor-NGO interaction

If foreign assistance to civil society is conceptualized as a discourse, this means that ideas about what constitutes assistance, its goals and methods are both constitutive of reality and are constituted by reality. Institutional changes within USAID, such as the foundation of the Center for Democracy and Governance, the introduction of civil society specialist positions, and budget appropriations for the promotion of civil society and democracy, are all

[329] "Discursive event" is a descriptive term I use, which should not be mistaken for the "speech event" introduced by D. Hymes, *The Ethnography of Speaking* (Washington, DC: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1962), D. Hymes, ed., *Language in Culture and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964)..
[330] Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." *British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (1993): p.489.
[331] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.
[332] Howarth, *Discourse*, p.111.

inconceivable prior to the idea that the American government has a role to play in the political transformation of the former Soviet Block and that such a transformation should entail building up civil societies in the respective countries. At the same time, such institutional and material factors can gradually transform the discourse and change its meanings. Indeed, as I show in the following four chapters, the scope of the change that has occurred within the civil society assistance discourse in a period of little more than a decade is striking.

The most important Bakhtinian element to the definition of a discourse is the notion of dialogicality. If dialogicality is the founding principle of discursive operations, this means that civil society assistance discourse cannot be seen as a stable set of ideas that originate at US governmental agencies. Instead, civil society assistance discourse is constantly (re)enacted within interactions between different actors that operate in different contexts, and each of these interactions can redefine this discourse in new ways. Such a dialogic conception of discourse constructs it as a living phenomenon rather than a stable structure or a set of discursive tools. Defined in such a way, discourse is neither a structure that fully dominates actors, nor is it an instrument that can be strategically utilized by actors. This emphasis on the transformations of a discourse allows us to understand how it functions across different contexts of interaction.

Such a contextual vision of discourse follows a Wittgensteinian idea that utterances cannot be usefully understood outside of the practices in which they are (re)produced and transformed. In other words, this is a situated (or "sited") understanding of discourse. In his recent work, Hajer explores possibilities of conceptualizing this dimension of discourse. His suggestion is to add a dramaturgical dimension to the analysis: Through use of such concepts as "performativity" and "performance" he conveys "the understanding that certain meanings constantly have to be reproduced, that signification must be *enacted*, and that this takes place in a particular 'setting'."[333] Although the model of analysis that I present below does not incorporate the dramaturgical dimension, nor does it employ concepts such as "performance", the idea of the situated "enactment" of a discourse is key to the overall approach that I develop.

In the case of USAID civil society assistance to Ukraine, I have identified three core sites of interaction at which the discourse is (re)enacted. The *first site of interaction* is Washington DC. It includes the institutional settings of donor agencies and bureaus with certain procedures and modes of operation; at the same site there are also various organizations that are involved in donors' activities either through subcontracting or through providing consultancy services, such as American NGOs, think tanks, or consultancy firms. The *second site of interaction* is Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. This is the site at which actors from a variety of backgrounds interact towards implementing civil society assistance programs. These include the donor mission to the country, representatives of subcontractors and consultancy firms, local think tanks, and NGOs. In a way, Kiev is a point of mediation between the international

[333] Maarten Hajer, "Rebuilding Ground Zero: The Politics of Performance," *Planning Theory & Practice* 6, no. 4 (2005): p.448, emphasis in the original.

and the local discourses. The *third site of interaction* are the settings of local women's NGOs. Each NGO should also be viewed in the diversity of its interactions with its constituencies, other local and international civil society groups, and local administrations. Their site is the final receiving point of the assistance chain, which also connects back to the other two localities. Therefore, the relevant discursive interaction takes place not only within but also across the sites. None of the sites should be viewed as a uniform actor; rather each is defined by the complexity of interactions that take place within and across them. In this sense, there are no clearly defined center and margins of donor-NGO interaction, since those are constantly re-negotiated at different sites of interaction[334] as well as across them. The so-called "donor-speak", for example, is key to NGO interaction with foreign aid agencies. In addition, NGOs also need to communicate with many more actors – from city council bureaucrats to the actual recipients of NGO services - for whom these notions may mean something else, if they seem relevant at all.

The civil society assistance discourse is structured by a constant interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces. In order to understand the dynamics of how these various sites are tied together by a common discourse of institutionalizing civil society, it is necessary to reveal the workings of a "unitary language" that pulls these multiple sites together so as to create a seemingly uniform system of meanings. I show how such a totality creates a common language and practice and, ultimately, engenders particular identities and activities. Centripetal forces of the discourse are embedded in a set of discursive centers – key notions that together form a coherent system of meaning that defines what assistance to civil society is. Therefore, the first step in the analysis is to identify these discursive centers as they emerge from interactions at the respective sites. This coherence, however, is never fully stable due to the workings of centrifugal forces that contest the taken-for-granted-ness and the unity of the discourse. These forces are visible in the alternative meanings and interpretations that are present within various (re)enactments of the assistance discourse. They introduce the so-called openings in the "unitary language" and force its transformations.

Ultimately, the analysis reveals whether and how the civil society assistance discourse creates conditions of possibility for Ukrainian women's NGOs. It shows how exactly civil society, its activities, and its role in a democratizing society are defined, and helps explicate the dominance of these definitions. To quote Schudson, "the power of the story is not so much that there are limits to the number of plausible interpretations but that the interpretations we encounter are of it and not of some other story."[335] Or, as Hajer argued, the power lies in creating the very terms with which politics is conducted.[336] In other words, however much discontent with the civil society assistance discourse is expressed on different planes of

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[334] This is not to overstate the probability that a local NGO could be more powerful than a big foreign donor organization but to emphasize that their relative positions should not be essentialized.
[335] Michael Schudson, "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols," *Theory and Society* 18, no. 2 (1989): p.157.
[336] Hajer and Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievement, Challenges, Perspectives," p.181.

interaction, the interactions in different localities are defined and structured by its main discursive centers rather than by some other notions and meanings. Whether or not the openings and alternative meanings add up to overthrow the dominant discourse or to render it meaningless has to be investigated for each particular instance.

3.3. Conclusion

The dialogical discourse analysis discussed in this chapter is particularly useful for understanding how assistance is constituted by interactive processes of meaning-making. Given the overall agreement among scholars and practitioners alike that foreign assistance matters for the development of civil society, it is important to ask how exactly foreign assistance is *made* to matter. It is important to reveal the mechanisms that enable different actors to render civil society assistance meaningful. In the following chapters I reveal discursive mechanisms that ensure the stability of civil society assistance discourse despite many criticisms that are not only widely recognized in the academic literature but, by now, have also been internalized by the donor itself. Drawing on ideas of the situated and dialogical nature of the discourse, I identify three core sites in which civil society assistance discourse is enacted – Washington DC, Kiev, and local NGOs. The structure of the remaining four chapters of this dissertation follows the logic of this division into sites. Chapters four to six correspond to the study of the civil society assistance discourse within each of the three sites. Chapter seven is dedicated to exploring the connections between the three sites by comparing their core elements as well as transformations in meaning across them.

Chapter 4: Washington DC. The Origins of Assistance

The assistance discourse originates in the governmental departments and federal agencies based in Washington DC. In this chapter, by focusing on assistance programs by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), I investigate the development of the core discursive centers that sustain this discourse. I show that the discourse of "assistance" is relatively new but highly prominent in US foreign policy. Its emergence was characterized by the sense of urgency and uniqueness felt at the end of the Cold War. In fact, "novelty" and "uniqueness" became the founding features that defined the nature of "assistance" discourse. The emergence and development of "assistance" discourse was constitutive of political and institutional change in the US foreign policy.

The overall coordination of the U.S. assistance is placed within the U.S. Department of State. More than a half of US government funds are administered by USAID, including almost all funds allocated for the support to civil society and democratic reform. USAID is an independent federal government agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the Secretary of State. USAID's history is said to date back to the Marshall Plan and the Truman Administration's Point Four Program. The actual institution was founded in 1961 with President John F. Kennedy signing the Foreign Assistance Act. USAID became the first U.S. foreign assistance organization whose primary emphasis was on long-range economic and social development assistance efforts. The involvement of USAID in Ukraine and other former Soviet republics started after the official demise of the USSR in 1991, whereas its operations in the other "satellite" countries were launched in 1989.

After the end of the Cold War adjustments were made at the federal agencies and new units were created. In 1991 a New Independent States (NIS)[337] Task Force was established that comprised just six people. These were mainly development professionals with much experience in many other parts of the world but not in the former Soviet Union. In 1993 the Bureau for Europe and New Independent States (ENI) was formed that combined the Eastern Europe Task Force and the NIS Task Force. At the same time USAID was intensively seeking contacts with people who had knowledge of Russia and Ukraine either through previous contacts or as academics specializing in Russian studies. There were a number of universities that had had linkages to Ukraine during the Soviet times. There were also a few Ukrainian Americans who were willing to renew linkages with Ukraine or even go there to work. As a result, what is now called the Europe and Eurasia Bureau was formed by

[337] Sometimes the these countries are also referred to as "Newly" Independent States.

both "insiders" and "outsiders" to the existing "aid" machinery. Thus, a new concept changed the average profile of the professionals working with it.

The need for Russia and Ukraine specialists resulted in a staff that was much more mixed than in other bureaus in terms of professional backgrounds. Many of the people who came from the diaspora had a stronger commitment towards Ukraine than is usually the case with the so-called "development professionals" who specialize in a certain theme or area rather than a country. The new bureau was also in many ways disconnected from the other regional bureaus within USAID. In the words of a USAID official: "nobody quite knew what they were doing there in that bureau but it was said to be different from everything else." The concept of "assistance" created a new bureau different from other ones and a new cadre of USAID officers; at the same time it enabled the reconciliation of these new discursive and institutional structures with the existing ones.

According to the Bakhtinian framework of dialogical discourse analysis, this site of interaction is the point of origin of the "unitary language" of "assistance". I first explore the core ideas that define this discourse and justify its emergence and development. I further focus on the specific element of "assistance" at stake in this analysis – support to civil society. In fact, civil society itself is a category whose entry into the discursive field of US foreign policy was enabled by the "assistance" discourse. Despite its apparent (and expected) uniform and authoritarian nature, the civil society assistance discourse is sustained by several seemingly different discursive centers, such as "institutional capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability/ phase out". This internal diversity is important because it ensures a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability of the assistance discourse to both external and internal political change. I further focus on gender and women's issues within the larger civil society assistance discourse and discuss how a particular definition of these issues transforms the idea of women's "empowerment".

4.1. Assistance: The Rise of The "Unitary Language"

The founding principles of the assistance discourse are its emphasis on novelty and difference and the ideas of urgency and political significance. From the very beginning around 1989-1992 "assistance" was defined not in terms of what it has to do but in terms of what it should *not* be – it should not be the same as development "aid". It was argued that the new political context required new approaches, and so it was a widely shared belief that going into the countries of the former Soviet Block would require a new discourse that would define a new set of tools and mechanisms. The whole concept of providing financial and technical aid or support had to change. In our interview Deputy Assistance Administrator at USAID Barbara Turner explicitly referred to this process:

> Russia[338] was a great power and it remained great in many areas and they were still orbiting satellites around the world, the scientists were still producing high quality pharmaceuticals; we were very sensitive to the concern of the country that did not want to be seen as the ones on welfare; they did not want to be seen as poor African countries, they felt they were beyond that […]. So we started from the beginning trying to talk about it more as a *partnership* and more as *assistance* and a *transition* program rather than that they were developing countries […]. We did try to use very *different terminology* in those countries.[339]

Here the discourse of assistance is defined through such terms as "partnership", implying that support is provided on an equal footing and does not resemble charity. The discursive center of "transition" is also important because it implies a clear goal and a well-defined timeframe for change. It means that restructuring in the recipient countries as well as assistance itself are temporary and that the destination envisioned for each country is clear and self-evident. In other words, "transition" is not about what should happen in those countries but about how quickly it can happen.

In many areas the countries of the former Soviet Union had a potential comparable to if not exceeding that of the US, especially in the area of military, nuclear and space technologies. They also had a well-developed and heavily subsidized welfare system, literacy rates of almost a hundred percent, and high levels of higher education. At the same time, the collapse of the whole system and the political and economic instability that followed threatened rapid degeneration and abuse of powers and resources. Thus, the general feeling in Washington DC was that the US had to intervene and intervene fast in order to exert influence over the direction of change in these countries. The collapse of the USSR was said to present: "an *historic opportunity for a transition* to a peaceful and stable *international order* and the integration of the independent states of the former Soviet Union into the community of democratic nations." It was asserted that the "world/ international community has a *vital interest* in the success of this transition [and that it is] *imperative* for donor countries and institutions *to provide the expertise and support* necessary to ensure continued progress on economic and political reforms."[340]

There was an agreement that the collapse of the Soviet Union was an event of unprecedented magnitude and that maintaining the newly emerging international order depended on steering the "transition" of the countries of the former Soviet Union in the right direction; hence the emphasis on democracy, open markets, and political reforms. Assistance was about providing expertise and advice on how these goals could be attained more quickly. The United States government set forth two main reasons for its "assistance" to the former Soviet Union (fSU): it was economically beneficial and it was key to ensuring American national security. Both notions remain the cornerstones of the US foreign policy towards the fSU until today. They were clearly outlined in the FREEDOM Support Act:

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[338] Here meaning the Soviet Union; people often say "Russia" to refer to the former Soviet Union.
[339] Turner, August 17, 2004, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[340] US Congress. *Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasia Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act*, 1992, emphasis added.

> The United States is especially well-positioned because of its heritage and traditions to make a substantial contribution to this transition; […] failure to meet the opportunities presented by these developments could threaten United States *national security interests* and jeopardize *substantial savings* in United States defense that these developments have made possible; the independent states of the former Soviet Union face unprecedented environmental problems that jeopardize the quality of life and the very existence of not only their own peoples but also the peoples of other countries; trade and investment opportunities […] will generate employment and other economic *benefits* for the United States as the economies of the independent states of the former Soviet Union begin to realize their enormous potential as both customers and suppliers.[341]

The urgency and enthusiasm of the "assistance" discourse created the space for unprecedented proactive measures and unusually high spending. The first appropriations under the FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) came to USD 742 and 1,760 million for fiscal years 1993 and 1994, respectively.[342] According to the cumulative figures for the fiscal years 1992 – 2003 released by the US Department of State, the US government spent a total of about twenty billion dollars on assistance programs to the twelve countries of the former Soviet Union,[343] out of which more than three billion ($ 3.328 million) were spent in Ukraine in support of economic restructuring, democratization, and reforms in the health and social sectors. USAID was responsible for expending roughly half of these funds.

This was the largest US assistance effort at the time. However, as the US Congress was passing these budgets, USAID officers were busy figuring out how to spend the money in a way that would reflect the new ideas and imperatives. In other words, the new discourse about a "new" and "different" assistance had to be further substantiated with new notions and ideas about *how* assistance should take place. Moreover, these new notions had to be developed within the shortest possible time-frame. In the words of Donald Pressley, Assistant Administrator of the USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia: "Central and Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union were a new frontier for USAID in 1989. As a result, USAID had to try *new approaches*, move *quickly*, and constantly *adjust* to changing circumstances."[344] Assistance became a powerful discourse, the actual content of which, however, had yet to be defined. According to a more passionate account of another former USAID official:

> The original program itself was literally written on the back of a napkin. That's not an exaggeration! USAID put together a blueprint of what it needed to do,

[341] Ibid., emphasis added.
[342] Source: USAID financial information system. However, this one billion dollar increase for FY 1994 was not an annual appropriation, strictly speaking, because the funds were meant to be used for starting up a whole range of programs, strengthening the field missions, and so on.
[343] Excluding the three Baltic republics, which were funded together with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe under the SEED Act.
[344] Pressley, Donald L. "Preface." In *A Decade of Change: Profiles of USAID Assistance to Europe and Eurasia*, edited by USAID. Washington, DC: USAID, 1999, emphasis added.

> it sent it to Congress, Congress immediately allocated [funds]. Now just step back and think that you were spending something like a billion dollars on the part of the world you knew nothing about, you had no idea what to spend it on and you must spend it, you get told by Congress: get it out, just shove it out of the door.[345]

The political imperatives of delivering assistance were apparent much before an understanding of what kind of assistance was needed could develop. While it was politically important to stress the different nature of "assistance" as compared to "aid", it took longer to establish the actual content that had to match the promise of "assistance". Although it was established that the former Soviet Union had to be treated differently, the question of *how* differently remained open to a plentitude of programmatic and institutional responses. However, the urgency and strong emphasis on "novelty" of assistance also played an important constitutive role in the overall nature and direction of these discursive and institutional responses. In answering the "how" question, priority was given to solutions that took the least preparation and promised to yield tangible results the fastest. Such solutions turned out to be mostly of a technical nature and were designed with very little attention to the possible specificity of the new assistance countries.

The "new" recipients of assistance were not defined in terms of their specificity but in terms of their uniformity in the face of "assistance, as exemplified in the notion of a new "region" to be assisted. In 1989 the U.S. Congress passed the "Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act" to

> promote political democracy and economic pluralism in Poland and Hungary by assisting those nations during a critical period of transition and abetting the development in those nations of private business sectors, labor market reforms, and democratic institutions; to establish, through these steps, the framework for a composite program of support for East European democracy.[346]

This Act became the founding document that created the new "region" of the co-called SEED countries, which were to become the first recipients of "assistance". The same Act was used to extend assistance to other countries in Eastern Europe and three former Baltic republics of the USSR. In 1992 another Act was passed - the Freedom for Russia and the Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act (FSA) to "support freedom and open markets in the independent states of the former Soviet Union". The overall coordination of the U.S. assistance was placed within the U.S. Department of State. More than half of US government funds for assistance purposes were (and still are) administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), including almost all funds dedicated to support for civil society and democratic reform.

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[345] Lyday, August 20, 2004, interview by the author.
[346] US Congress. *Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act*, 1989, emphasis added.

In its programs in the region USAID always showed special attention to Ukraine, a preference which was primarily driven by security and geopolitical concerns, such as Ukraine's strategic position between Russia and Europe and its nuclear arsenal. When the Soviet Union broke up, Ukraine had on its territory the third largest strategic nuclear arsenal in the world – greater than those of the United Kingdom, France, and China combined. More recently (with all the nuclear warheads dismantled back in 1996) the US strategic interest in Ukraine is explained as follows:

> The United States has a strong national security interest in Ukraine's successful transition to a stable and independent, democratic, market-oriented, and prosperous state, with good relations with its neighbors and strong links to the West. *Its successful transition may assist similar transitions elsewhere in the region.* With a population of approximately 50 million and a strategic location between Russia and Central Europe, Ukraine is important for building *a secure and undivided Europe*.[347]

Strong US interest in the political and economic situation in Ukraine has also been evident before and during the presidential election in Ukraine in 2004, with high-level officials stating that the US wants to see "open, free, full and fair elections", which will determine the democratic credentials of Ukraine's next president.[348] On many occasions the election was described as an opportunity to accelerate development and integration with European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, and great concern was voiced about the campaign and the election rounds falling short of international standards.[349]

Altogether assistance discursively created a new political geography. Although the division into the so-called First, Second, and Third World countries did not disappear completely, a new "region" of assistance emerged as well as a new idea of the world in general. Initially, the discursive center of the new "region" was replicating the old Cold War divide; it included all the countries of the former Soviet Block (both satellite countries and the former Soviet republics). This was reflected not only in the merger of the SEED and FSA task forces that I mentioned earlier but also in the programming practices used. In the early 1990s appropriations were allocated for the "region" as a whole and the programming was done centrally for all the countries at once. In other words, there were no country-specific programs or funds. Also, some of the programs that were under way in Poland or Hungary before 1993 were duplicated in the other countries that "joined the region". Eleven thematic projects were authorized by the USAID that were seen as appropriate for all these countries and were implemented across the board.

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[347] US Department of State. "FY 2001 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations." Washington, DC, 2000, emphasis added.
[348] Office of Spokesman/U.S. Department of State. "Interview with Secretary of State Powell." Washington, DC, May 13, 2004.
[349] Boucher, Richard. "Press Statement." Washington, DC: US Department of State, October 14, 2004.

The projects listed in a USAID Fact Sheet dated June 1993 are, for example, energy efficiency and market reform, environmental policy and technology, health care improvement, private sector initiatives, food systems restructuring, democratic pluralism initiatives, housing sector reform, economic restructuring and financial reform, foundation for technical assistance (the Eurasia Foundation), NIS exchanges and training, and special initiatives that comprised quick response/cross-sectoral activities, emergency humanitarian assistance and pilot programs/innovative approaches. The latter category was introduced to ensure some flexibility in funds allocations beyond the other designated fields. The list of initiatives seemed diverse enough to include a variety of activities across countries and worded in general enough terms so that the actual implementation could take a variety of forms largely depending on the subcontractors who won the contracts. Such "emptiness" of assistance should be understood as a response to its "urgency".

Currently, the discursive center of a "region" is increasingly being transformed. Different countries that once belonged to the "region" are now placed under different headings. Many of the SEED countries are EU members now and so do not receive any assistance – they belong to the category of the "countries that graduated from assistance". The SEED funding has subsequently dropped and goes mainly to the Balkans today. After the events of 2001 and the two wars that followed, US foreign policy is increasingly preoccupied with a new "region" – that of the Middle East. As the political geography is being reconfigured, Central Asian countries and countries in the Caucasus are more and more considered in the context of their proximity to this strategic "region", rather than in the context of their post-communist heritage. The discursive center of the "region" of assistance that emerged in the early 1990s is thus currently being reconfigured.

In 2001 an attempt was made to reflect some of these changes in the administrative set-up of the State Department and USAID. As an official from the US Department of State Office of the Coordinator for US Assistance to Europe and Eurasia explained:

> New Independent States weren't new any more, and it was decided that they shouldn't necessarily be treated as one unit together. They are different countries now. At one point there was talk of putting the Central Asian countries with other parts covering Asia. That didn't happen so we have got this enormous Europe and Eurasia office that goes from Dublin to Dushanbe; it's 55 countries now, it's the largest bureau with over 500 people working.[350]

Although the Europe and Eurasia Bureaus still remain intact, it is likely that some of the countries involved will be re-clustered in the near future.

Another tendency that points to the dissolution of the "region" within the "assistance" discourse is the shift that is occurring from thinking in terms of geographical clusters to thinking in terms of "performance indicators". Assistance programs are now evaluated according to a variety of sectors, and each country's performance is measured per sector.

[350] Eisen, August 5, 2004, interview by the author.

Thus, "assistance" is now increasingly redefined through such notions as "evaluation" and "performance". This is in stark contrast to the "assistance" discourse as it developed through the 1990s. Due to the strong imperatives to set up the operations quickly there were no assessments conducted in those countries then, with the exception of short "field reports". Towards the late 1990s assessments in certain areas were introduced; however, until the present day there are hardly any evaluations available on programs implemented. The difference between an assessment and an evaluation is that the former is conducted to assess the need for a new program and recommend the best tools, while the latter evaluates the results of the programs that are being/were implemented. While there have been a few assessments conducted on the basis of which new programs were introduced, there are virtually no evaluations of the successes and failures of previous programs.

This is currently changing with the recently launched agency-wide "Initiative to Revitalize Evaluations" led by USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios. His four-part campaign aims to improve the way evaluations are conducted and used, as well as to increase the number of evaluations conducted by missions. Drawing on a recent study termed an "Evaluation of USAID Evaluation Experience", the agency now argues that the number of evaluations conducted dropped throughout the 1990s and that an increase would help "improve USAID's design of programs and policies, by doing a better job of capturing and learning from experience."[351] In the area of democracy assistance, some of the key indexes and measurements come from such annual publications as *Nations in Transit* by Freedom House and the "NGO Sustainability Index" by USAID. The general idea is that program design and planning would be increasingly driven by performance evaluations per sector and per country and, thus, assistance could be downsized in some thematic areas while being maintained in the others. This turn within the assistance discourse makes it possible to give up the notion of a post-Soviet "region" generally in need of assistance, while at the same time maintaining a number of assistance activities in the respective countries. Interestingly, in this new sector-based rather than region/ country-based approach civil society retains a prominent position and the funding for and through NGOs is unlikely to decrease in the near future.[352]

The proportion of democracy programs within the FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) budget for Ukraine increased (even though the overall FSA budget for Ukraine dropped) in the period 2002-2004. Democracy assistance has gone from one-fifth of the FSA budget for Ukraine to nearly one-third. In the words of Steven Pifer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs: "We have kept our investment in promoting democracy and civil society a strong one. […] We believe that this type of support reinforces what is already a very encouraging trend in post-independence Ukraine: namely, the *growth of civil society*."[353] In

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[351] *Evaluation of USAID Evaluation Experience* USAID, 2005 [cited 11 August 2005. Available from http://www.dec.org/partners/evalweb/.

[352] Fox, August 9, 2004, interview by author.

[353] Pifer, Steven. "Testimony before the House International Relations Committee." Washington, DC: US State Department, May 12, 2004, emphasis added.

the following section I show how exactly a particular conception of civil society has been developed within the assistance discourse.

4.2. Civil Society in Three Steps: The "Industry" at Work

The concept of civil society has been and remains a very important component of the assistance discourse. Already in the first year of assistance, the US government introduced the "democratic pluralism initiative" aimed at facilitating democratization in the countries of the former Soviet Union. It comprised four core components: political and civic organizations, the independent media, the rule of law and governance, and public administration. It might be said to have reinforced an idealist position in American foreign policy, namely the belief that the spread of democracy will lead to greater stability and prosperity in the world. As stated in one of the USAID documents:

> Democratic governments are more likely to advocate and observe international laws and to experience the kind of long-term stability, which leads to sustained development, economic growth, and international trade. Countries that are experiencing economic growth and are actively engaged in trading relationships are less likely to engage in acts of war.[354]

The idea to focus on the promotion of democracy was supported by a range of institutional measures. This meant that the newly emerging discourse on democracy and civil society materialized in the form of particular resources, positions, and administrative structures. The Center for Democracy and Governance was founded in 1994; in addition, each of the regional bureaus received their own democracy and civil society advisors. The Center's role is to provide technical and intellectual leadership to USAID's decentralized mission-based structure by developing tools and methodologies needed to support democratic development.[355] The Center does not have planning or budgetary authority; it is a purely advisory unit. In principle, the Center's task is to facilitate the democracy and civil society building effort across the different regional bureaus; however, it is up to the regional bureaus and field missions to choose to work together with the Center. Therefore, the existence the Center should not be mistaken for a sign of coherence of USAID's overall worldwide democracy and civil society support.

In fact, the ideas at the core of civil society support in the former Soviet Union were very different from those that were the basis for civil society programs in other regions. The conception of civil society within the post-communist assistance discourse was framed in much broader and vaguer terms as a response to the "empty" nature of the assistance discourse itself. This made this civil society assistance discourse different from other civil

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[354] USAID. "Democracy and Governance: A Conceptual Framework." 24: Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research, November 1998, p.1.
[355] Ibid, p.5.

society programs implemented overseas. In the words of Gary Hansen, Chief of the USAID Civil Society Division:

> Most of our programs overseas are not designed to build civil societies writ large, we're interested in civil society organizations that are advocating on the behalf of good governance and political reform and so forth […]; in this office we are not interested in a lot of organizations they were supporting in the Europe and Eurasia Bureau.[356]

However, as I show below, the proclaimed difference between civil society assistance to the "region" and to other parts of the world depends exactly on its vagueness rather than on a substantively different conception of civil society.

4.2.1. Institutional capacity building: "Let a thousand flowers bloom"

"Institutional capacity building" is a discursive center that defines civil society in terms of formal organizational features and technical tools. It served as a link between "aid" and "assistance" and allowed the USAID staff to bring the models and tools of "development aid" into the new "assistance" programs. The below quote from an interview shows clearly how this link was created:

> I think that what we found in Ukraine was that it didn't need the same kind of things Africa needed; for instance, in Africa it was basic education, immunizing children and things like that. […] What was missing was something we always had as our high priority, which we call *institutional development* […]. We found that while the actual types of things we did in Ukraine were different, the *institutional capacity* still needed to be developed. [People] were good technicians but they weren't good managers, had no inventory or budgeting capacity. So we found those sorts of skills were actually quite valuable.[357]

In this way a connection was established between "aid" and "assistance": While the content was admitted to be different, the old tools and skills were argued to be applicable to the "assistance" setting. This opened the door for some programs and models developed for other parts of the world. Another important component of assistance that is evident from the above quote is "assistance as teaching". The assistance recipients were seen as "good students" who had taken the wrong classes, and in this way one of the goals of assistance was defined: to teach new skills and to provide the locals with new information.

"Institutional capacity building" found wide application in the civil society assistance. It aimed at providing tools and trainings that would make NGOs resemble their American counterparts in terms of their formal structure. Following the "institutional capacity building"

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[356] Hansen, August 5, 2004, interview by the author.
[357] Turner, 17 August 2004, interview by the author, emphasis added.

idea USAID established a New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) in 1995 "to stimulate lasting economic, social, and political developments by building local institutional capacity in non-governmental organizations, competitive small business, and democratic local governments." The "NGO Strengthening" or "NGO Empowerment" component was meant to promote "the active participation of citizens in political and economic decision-making through training and small grants."[358] "Increased capacity" meant that NGOs would become more professional and show the formal organizational features characteristic of their American counterparts. NPI was meant to "strengthen the direct contribution of local organizations to development, and […] help increase their professionalism, efficiency, accountability, and transparency."[359]

The initial understanding of civil society by the Agency was that at the time when the assistance programs began civil society in Eastern Europe was

> either nascent or nonexistent in most countries in the region [because] most populations lacked the basic rights of a democratic civil society: freedom of expression, the right to organize, to advocate one's interests, to form independent political parties, to hold free and fair elections.[360]

Indeed, USAID officers were not finding the same kinds of local partners in the fSU as they were used to finding elsewhere. Some of the core categories, such as service delivery NGOs, think tanks, advocacy NGOs, grass-roots groups etc., either did not have any real world equivalents here at all or were only applicable to the old institutionally strong Soviet associations. Thus, in the beginning most of the effort was invested into helping create these kinds of organizations.

Since there were no organizations in place whose capacity could be built up according to the USAID scheme, the discursive center of "institutional capacity building" initially had a component that was captured by a metaphor: "let a thousand flowers bloom!" Apparently, nobody at USAID was aware of the origins of the slogan in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and so it was embraced as an appropriate metaphor for the newly acquired democratic freedoms and democratic pluralism in the fSU.[361] This approach was new to the USAID, in the words of Gary Hansen, the Chief of Civil Society Division at USAID:

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[358] USAID/West NIS. "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request (R4)." June 3, 1996.

[359] USAID. "Core Report of the New Partnerships Initiative (Internal Draft)." Washington, DC: USAID, July 21, 1995.

[360] USAID. "Lessons in Implementation: The NGO Story. Building Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States." USAID Bureau for Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Office of Democracy and Governance, October 1999, v.

[361] The phrase comes from a speech delivered by Chairman Mao Zedong shortly before China's Cultural Revolution. In the original, "let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" was proclaimed to encourage freedom of expression, debate, and independent thinking, and gave rise to the Hundred Flowers movement of 1956-57. However, shortly afterwards it was twisted to mean that upper-class artists, writers, and scientists should have no greater claim than their proletarian counterparts. In fact, it was said, the upper classes had been monopolizing the cultural and scientific spheres for too long. Politically, this translated into the Communist Party of China demarcating a clear line between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries. As Lu Ting-Yi, the director of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, announced: "No freedom should be extended to counter-revolutionaries: for them we only have a

> The Europe and Eurasia Bureau (E&E) was very different in respect to civil society from the other regional bureaus; it defined civil society very broadly. When the transition began the E&E said "our role is to build any kind of associations that are there to appear." […] The culture of association as an independent initiative had been pretty much crushed by the communist government so the idea was to give people incentives to start working together, organizing themselves one way or the other.[362]

The "thousand flowers" approach was implemented through "small grants" programs that were aimed at supporting as many different initiatives as possible. USAID was not investing in long-term relationships but in engaging as many different organizations as possible. "USAID's goal is to create a large, diverse community of local NGOs capable of promoting sustainable development. […] NGOs are everywhere a potentially critical vehicle for articulating collective interests and for ensuring citizen participation in the development process."[363]

The "thousand flowers" approach meant that funds were spent to ensure there were NGO-like initiatives in place as soon as possible. In this way, the approach was by definition supply-driven, meaning that USAID was supplying funds for particular kinds of flowers to bloom. Questions of how to create NGOs relevant to the Ukrainian context were never raised. While high levels of technical assistance were put into providing tools and skills, the issue of who exactly would be using those, and for what purposes, was never addressed. So, thousands of Ukrainian activists were taught NGO management skills at rates that were higher than the numbers of NGOs to be managed. There was a strong belief that civil society assistance should be about putting in place a critical number of "properly" managed NGOs. However, the question was never raised whether such organizations would be able to function in the Ukrainian context and to meet the needs of the Ukrainian civil society. In fact, the connection between the growth of professional NGOs and the institutionalization of a strong civil society was never investigated either. After several years of civil society assistance, USAID could report the former but not the latter as an achievement. Moreover, it had to face a range of criticisms that I discussed in chapters one and two, such as for example, corrupt or nepotistic practices among NGOs that received assistance.

In response, by the end of the 1990s USAID had to admit that institutionalizing a strong civil society in countries like Ukraine would take longer than was initially expected. On the one hand, the explosive growth of NGOs was seen as a positive indicator attributed to the success of assistance: "USAID and other donor assistance has helped fuel the explosive growth of NGO sectors in these countries."[364] On the other hand, the agency attributed the

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dictatorship. A clear political line must be drawn between friend and foe." (Lu Ting-Yi, May 26 1956) Within months, the same slogan was used to justify persecution and purges of political opponents.

[362] Hansen, 5 August 2004, interview by the author.

[363] USAID. "Core Report of the New Partnerships Initiative".

[364] USAID. "Lessons in Implementation", p.xi.

apparent problems (such as lack of financial viability, poor organizational management, lack of public awareness of NGO activities, failure to effectively serve or represent constituencies and clients, etc.) to the nature of the transformation process itself and not to assistance. It argued that the rapid NGO growth was triggered by greater freedom of association, heightened awareness of global issues, and "vigorous response to the opportunities and responsibilities that accompany democracy."[365] The donors were positioned not as another influential factor for the growth and its shortcomings but as yet another party overwhelmed by rapid change, almost as a victim. It was the accelerated change that was said to have challenged donors' capacity to be phased and strategic in their programs and not the problematic design and shortsightedness of those programs. Here, again the thousand flowers metaphor came in to stress that such flowers do and should grow on their own.

> For donors, the pace of growth has made it difficult to keep abreast of developments in the sector and *to know whether they are working with organizations with a viable, authentic constituency.* […] In general, accelerated change – coupled with the desire to exert an early positive impact – has challenged donors' capacity to be phased and strategic in their program design; instead, donors have tended to concentrate on the merits of individual projects and the strength of individual organizations.[366]

Interestingly, the "thousand flowers" metaphor meant that there were no clearly defined eligibility criteria for the NGO projects - an organization only had to have some formal features of an NGO, and so the notions of "viable, authentic constituency" were never part of the civil society assistance discourse to begin with.

I argue that the "thousand flowers" metaphor did not mean more openness and pluralism. Ironically, its meaning and function within USAID was not so different from its original one in the history of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The "thousand flowers" metaphor was employed to engage with local civic actors prior to clarifying the terms of such engagement in order to recruit civic leaders and introduce them to different socialization programs. However, it did not presuppose either space for actually learning from those civic leaders or mechanisms for including this local knowledge into the civil society assistance principles and programs.

The longer presence of "assistance" in Ukraine – even if initially unexpected – necessitated the extension of the civil society assistance discourse. In other words, the discourse had to account for more than just a temporary technical intervention. It had to respond to the developments that were taking place in Ukraine, to address difficulties or even failures that were becoming apparent, and to deliver its longer-term vision for the future. In the next subsection I show how this has been made possible through the rise of the discursive center of "empowerment".

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[365] USAID. "A Decade of Change: Profiles of USAID Assistance to Europe and Eurasia." Washington, DC: USAID, 1999, p.10.
[366] USAID. "Lessons in Implementation", p.11, emphasis added.

4.2.2. Empowerment: Getting the "mentality" right

Even though the assistance discourse never considered local ideas about and forms of civil society, it developed discursive mechanisms to adapt to the local environment. Throughout its assistance "career" in Ukraine, the US government constantly had to respond to the harsh social and economic realities and political tensions that resulted from the collapse of the previous socialist system. In 1996 USAID was saying that since 1994

> there has been considerable progress mixed with significant setbacks. While President Kuchma's commitment to the reform program appears firm, support within the ranks of government has been uneven. The Parliament especially has often proved an obstacle to reform […]; as long as the quality of life continues to deteriorate for Ukrainian citizens, maintaining political and popular will to see the reform process through will be a constant challenge.[367]

Uneven local responses to reform and deteriorating conditions were putting the US supported reform process in danger. In addition, there was always the fear that Russian influence would be resumed. USAID was worried about such tendencies as the "renewed Russian dominance, compounded by the resurgence of Russian Communism, and the popularity of the Communist Party candidate in the 1996 Russian presidential election."[368] Here another concern comes out clearly – to make sure that hardships in Ukraine would not lead to Ukraine "falling back" into the sphere of Russian influence.

By the late 1990s the situation in Ukraine was not improving as expected. The years of 1998-1999 were marked by important political and economic events. The shortcomings of the reform process were exacerbated by the Asian financial crisis of 1998, which had a grave impact on both Russia and Ukraine. There was also an apparent rise in support for left-wing parties and movements in Ukraine. In the parliamentary election of 1998 the Communist Party of Ukraine was far ahead of the other parties, taking about 25% of the votes; the other two left-wing parties, the Block of the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Agrarian Party of Ukraine and the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, gained 8.5% and 4% of the votes respectively.[369] These developments led to the adoption of another important discursive center - "empowerment". The "empowerment" concept entails three related notions: social transition issues, awareness-raising and information distribution, and mentality change. Assistance not only had a prescriptive claim on what kinds of institutions had to be built but was also developing a set of responses to the political, social, and economic challenges in Ukraine.

The focus on "social transition issues" was meant to ensure that the critical mass of the Ukrainian population would stay "with their heads above water", so that poverty and

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[367] USAID/West NIS. "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request", p.1.
[368] Ibid., 3.
[369] Committee of Voters of Ukraine (CVU). *Returns of 1998 Election to the Ukrainian Parliament*, 1998 [cited 10 June 2000. Available from www.cvu.kiev.ua.

disillusionment would not ignite conflicts or a national crisis. These concerns were voiced from early on: "Popular support for reform will evaporate unless social benefits and services are maintained […], if affordable methods are not developed to shelter the poor from rapid price increases, falling incomes, and the deterioration of basic public services."[370]

In 1999 again an increasing emphasis was placed on "social transition issues"; ten years of economic and political restructuring had led to "greater poverty and hardship than anticipated at the beginning of the transition."[371] Fearing that hardship and the disillusionment with reforms would increase the popularity of left-wing parties,[372] USAID decided to pay greater attention to improving the quality of life in Ukraine to mitigate any backlash against the reform process. The worry was that the population was growing cynical about the reform process and apathetic toward participation in citizens' groups in Ukraine.[373] So it was argued that "USAID has a role to play in bringing the benefits of systemic change to a broader population."[374]

The agency believed this could be achieved through empowering populations and increasing economic opportunity at the provincial and local levels. Activities at the local level were defined as key for assuring the actual implementation of the nationally adopted reforms. "Successful transition requires public confidence and acceptance of new ways of operating."[375] Reaching out to a broader constituency at the grassroots and regional levels was seen as necessary for building an understanding of and a demand for reform and developing a cadre of local leaders for change. Thus, in addition to improving social conditions there was a perceived need for changing people's attitudes towards reform or, in broader terms, their "mentality".

People in Ukraine were believed not to be aware of "the universe of possibilities" for improvement that existed. "They cannot articulate the changes they want, therefore their advocacy policies are ineffective."[376] Thus, it was seen as imperative to invest in information campaigns that would explain and popularize the reforms. One of the most expensive civil society projects in Ukraine was UMREP – the Ukraine Market Reform Education Program established in 1993 as a joint project of the governments of Ukraine and the US through USAID. Its rationale was that:

> Increased, better-informed citizens' participation in political and economic decision-making is essential to the development of a viable democracy in

[370] USAID/West NIS. "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request".
[371] USAID. "From Transition to Partnership: A Strategic Framework for USAID Programs in Europe and Eurasia." Washington, DC: USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, December 1999, p.ii.
[372] This "communist phobia" is evident from various assessments of the political process in the fSU – high levels of support for communist parties are persistently quoted in USAID documents as worrisome tendencies (for example, USAID/Kiev. "Ukraine: Country Strategic Plan for FY 2003-2007." Kiev: USAID Regional Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, September 2002). Other assistance professionals pointed this out during our interviews as well.
[373] USAID. "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999-2002." 45, March 29, 1999, p.2.
[374] USAID. "From Transition to Partnership", p.ii.
[375] Ibid., p.33.
[376] USAID. "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999-2002", p.11.

> Ukraine. USAID's independent media program is enabling Ukrainian citizens to become better informed about current events in general, including issues related to economic reform.[377]

In addition to informing people about the substance of and the need for the US-supported reforms in Ukraine, this objective also contained a stronger educational claim. It aspired to change what was believed to be the wrong mentality inherited by the Ukrainians from their Soviet past. This is, for example, captured by the following quote: "Given the Ukrainian history of top down political and economic decision-making and service to the state, changing people's expectations and behavior to accept that the state is responsive to influence by the people is a major transition."[378]

It is on the basis of these ideas that the discursive center of "empowerment" was defined. The key assumption of "empowerment" was the need to replace the wrong Soviet mentality with new liberal values and beliefs among the population. In addition to the task of "institutional capacity building", the Agency was increasingly speaking of the need to change individual values, attitudes, and behaviors: "The importance of individual attitudes, practices and behaviors for successful transition had been underestimated."[379] In 2002 the Agency commissioned a multi-party investigation into USAID's civic programming in order to understand how and under what conditions civic education contributes to the development of a more active and informed democratic citizenry and to explore perspectives of integrating civic education components into other assistance programs. The rationale for engaging with civic education was that "for a democracy to survive and flourish, a critical mass of its citizens must possess the skills, embody the values, and manifest the behaviors that accord with democracy."[380]

Individual participation was seen as essential for shaping and deepening the reform process. The goal for the assistance area "democratic transition" was to "foster democratic societies and institutions through the empowerment of citizens."[381] For purposes of "empowerment" civil society activity was broadly defined as participation in political and economic processes by well-informed and responsible citizens.[382] Across the portfolio, the Agency placed an emphasis on public education, training and exchange programs as well as selective interventions for curriculum change in schools. In 1999 education was identified as a priority for the future. While the short-term objective remained to push for top-level structural reforms, the long-term goal was seen as "working to prepare the next generation or perhaps the generation after for coming to power."[383]

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377 USAID/West NIS. "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request", p.3.
378 Ibid., 63.
379 USAID. "From Transition to Partnership", p.33.
380 USAID. "Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned." Washington, DC: Office for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, June 2002.
381 USAID. "From Transition to Partnership", p.vi.
382 USAID. "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999-2002", p.31.
383 Ibid., p.10.

The education approach worked in two ways: it aimed at promoting the so-called "demonstration effects", on the one hand, and at bringing up a new "critically thinking" generation of Ukrainians, on the other. The former goal was highly reminiscent of the liberal idealist belief that all it takes is to expose peoples to liberal democratic values and they could not but embrace them eagerly. The educational efforts were related to the idea of a "wrong mentality" in the sense that much blame was directed towards the legacies of communism, which meant that older generations were almost perceived as hopeless for building a new democratic society.

"Empowerment" was defined in terms of individual values and concerns, "[g]etting people to believe in themselves, to rely less on government to guide their daily lives, and to take control of their destiny through economic opportunities and political choices."[384] The extent to which "empowerment" colonized the civil society assistance discourse is striking. On the one hand, this being a question of survival in the first place, it is hard to believe that those people who had the resources (for example, material and physical resources and networks) and belonged to advantaged social and demographic groups at the beginning of transition would not have used the available opportunities to guide their daily lives. On the other hand, according to the Agency's own analysis, the biggest "losers of transition", such as children, ethnic and religious minorities, women-led households, female pensioners, etc., are the ones who more often oppose reform or show apathy. These groups are unlikely to benefit from "demonstration effects" unless provided with structural opportunities and financial means to improve their positions.

4.2.3. Sustainability: Enabling the "phase out"

Defining "assistance" in terms of facilitating "transition" on a short-term basis meant that there has always been a clear idea of a "phase out". In terms of the time that was believed to be needed to achieve the assistance goals, in the early 1990s the Americans aimed at the shortest possible intervention not exceeding three to five years. From 1991 on, U.S. assistance programs:

> …operated on the premise that a small number of targeted interventions in economic policy reform, coupled with selective support for democracy building, would help move countries of Europe and Eurasia far enough *along the transition path* that they could enter normal economic and political relations with other countries and *complete the journey* on their own.[385]

In 1994 a USAID administrator confirmed: "Our mandate is not a protracted program of economic support, but one that is strategically targeted to support a critical period of

[384] Ibid., p.12.
[385] USAID. "From Transition to Partnership", p.3, emphasis added.

economic and political transition and then phase out."[386] The discursive center of the "phase out" thus has been an important part of assistance from its very first day – even before any substantial assistance reached its recipients USAID had started talking about the "phase out" and, ironically, it continues to do so still.

Now there seems to be a general consensus within USAID that the initial policy assumptions about the transition timeframe were not realistic. This view is also supported by Barbara Turner, the USAID Deputy Assistance Administrator:

> At that time [in the beginning of assistance] US government thought that we would have a short-term program in those countries; we were invited by the State Department to keep our projects to no more than three years because the feeling was that for Russia and Ukraine (and we always knew that Central Asia would be different) - those were pretty sophisticated countries, they had high levels of education, nuclear power, scientists, governments that knew how to function, so they would transform more quickly. Clearly we underestimated the complexity of shifting from communist centrally run society and economy to a pluralistic society and economy […] . So we had to do a lot more programs than we ever anticipated.[387]

Already in 1999, much more circumspect judgments were put forward about the anticipated impact of assistance. Generally, USAID withdrew from claiming to know how to "do transition" and turned around to downplay the impact it could have on the country's development:

> The euphoria that greeted independent Ukraine in 1991 has subsided. The G7 countries anticipated a quick and thorough destruction of Ukraine's Soviet past, but expectations were overly ambitious and greatly exceeded what could realistically be done. […] The donors have learned that the problems for countries in transition are unique and complex. Lack of political will does not fully account for lack of progress. Western experts hold neither precise nor clear remedies for Ukraine's troubles.[388]

However, updating the timeframe and toning down the ambitions of "assistance" did not lead to a dismissal of the notion of a "phase out", which remains one of the core discursive centers.

The main implication of the discursive center of the "phase out" is that it defines long-term processes and goals in terms of short-term interventions. It therefore prevents the emergence of long-term commitments and of experimenting with various organizational forms and with different assistance partners. With the shadow of "phase out" looming above the heads of USAID officers from the very beginning of assistance, very little incentive was

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386 Atwood, Brian J. "Statement before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations." Washington, DC: US Department of State, January 24, 1994.
387 Turner, August 17, 2004, interview by the author.
388 USAID. "U.S. Assistance Strategy for Ukraine 1999-2002", p.1-2.

created for investing time and effort into building up long-term relationships. Instead, preference was given to those partnerships that would enable spending money and getting reportable results on a yearly basis.

The idea of a "phase out" was important for civil society programs also because it translated into an emphasis on the "sustainability" of NGOs. NGOs had to reach a certain degree of "sustainability" in a relatively short time by means of increasing their organizational effectiveness and professionalism. The standard of professionalism was set by the American NGOs implementing NGO programs in Ukraine. The idea was that the sooner Ukrainian NGOs resembled their American counterparts, the sooner NGO programs could be phased out and the activities that constituted them could be relegated to Ukrainian NGOs. This meant that the "sustainability" of Ukrainian NGOs was not defined in terms of their position in Ukrainian society in the after-funding phase but in terms of how instrumental they could become in facilitating the "phase out" of assistance. Professional and cost-effective NGOs were argued to accelerate the "graduation" from assistance.[389]

> USAID's experience with small NGO grants and local development activities is that they are information and staff intensive. However, under NPI [New Partnership Initiative], most of these responsibilities will be transferred to USAID's development partners by focusing on *capacity building* of local organizations early in the process and encouraging the development of *intermediary organizations* […]. USAID's direct management role will be reduced, providing considerable cost savings.[390]

Thus, the discursive center of sustainability also meant that local NGOs were expected to become capable of taking over some of the assistance activities implemented by USAID and its implementing partners, making assistance cheaper for USAID. This also led civil society assistance in Ukraine to become increasingly similar to such programs in other parts of the world. Over the past few years, there is no more talk of the "thousand flowers"; instead, the USAID and other democracy program implementers are increasingly concerned with promoting professional advocacy organizations.[391]

A new Assistance Strategy for Ukraine for the fiscal years 2003-2007 was written up in a much more enthusiastic tone than the previous one due to the improved situation in the country in terms of impressive levels of economic growth and increased social and economic stability. The proposed activities were said to "fine-tune existing activities building on previous successes."[392] The period was framed as extending "beyond transition" and into sustainable economic growth. The Agency made a definite claim that the basic institutions needed were in place and therefore the assistance should focus on increasing their effectiveness and sustainability. In addition, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 changed the language in

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389 USAID. "Core Report of the New Partnerships Initiative".
390 Ibid., emphasis added.
391 Hansen, August 5, 2004, interview by author.
392 USAID/Kiev. "Ukraine: Country Strategic Plan for FY 2003-2007", p.5.

which civil society is talked about today considerably. Civil society is now widely seen as already in place, as having revealed itself at a critical moment.

> While the governments can put in place laws to protect our most cherished institutions and freedoms, that in and of itself is not enough. There must be a civil society where democratic values live in citizens' hearts and minds, where people stand up for what is right and where the rule of law, not the rule of crime and corruption, prevails. In recent weeks, Ukraine's people have shown that they have been building a *civil society*.[393]

For the fiscal year (FY) 2005[394] the administration had initially requested less than eighty million dollars for Ukraine (compared to around USD 225 million per year in the late 1990s); however, in February 2005 (just two months after the revolution) it doubled the budget request up to USD 165.5 million, including sixty million for democracy assistance to consolidate the achievements in the progress towards democracy. Once again, Ukraine became the largest recipient of American governmental assistance in the former Soviet Union. Despite the recent "phase out" measures and performance evaluations, civil society and democracy are among the sectors that are unlikely to see considerable funding drops in the near future. Indeed, as stated in the FY 2005 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations:

> In FY [fiscal year] 2005, FSA assistance will be used to broaden Ukraine's *growing civil society*, foster participatory democracy, and buttress the independent media. … The United States will therefore focus *increased* resources on strengthening local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and independent research institutions[395] that serve as *watchdogs* over the government's activities and articulate public interest. In addition, funding will continue for legal support and training for independent media. FSA funding will also continue to support the development of and access to the Internet throughout Ukraine and grassroots activism aimed at community empowerment.[396]

After the 2004 presidential election, which is widely labeled the "victory of civil society and democratic forces in Ukraine", it is also likely that democracy support will be increased in the countries whose democratic success is being questioned by the USA (e.g. Moldova or Central Asian countries). The events in Ukraine are believed to have a broader impact on the region in the sense that

> [they] will signal millions of people that democratic freedom is on the ascendance, this will help bolster pro-democracy NGOs, even as authoritarian

[393] Clinton, Hillary Rodham. "America Must Back Ukraine's Struggle for Democracy." *Financial Times*, December 27, 2004, emphasis added.
[394] Starting on October 31, 2005.
[395] This generally includes the so-called "think tanks", which are registered as NGOs. For example, Freedom House has administered grants to such think tanks.
[396] US Department of State. "FY 2005 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations." Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2004.

> governments in Belarus, parts of Central Asia, and elsewhere in Eurasia advance crackdowns on pro-democracy civil society groups.[397]

This changing understanding of the potential of civil society support was visible already in 2002, when support to civil society was defined as aiding a "citizenry increasingly engaged in promoting their interests and rights for a more democratic market-oriented state." The ultimate goals were (1) to increase the extent to which citizens believe that they can influence the government and (2) to increase civic activism - the former reflecting the discursive center of "empowerment" and the latter that of "advocacy".[398]

"Advocacy" is a relatively new term for the USAID programs for Ukraine. Although advocacy techniques were mentioned before (more in passing than in a directive sense) in documents for Ukraine this is the first time that advocacy training is mentioned as a part of civil society assistance. According to USAID, "advocacy" is a method to demand transparency and accountability from the government by employing a range of professional tools, such as "information, coalition building, engaging the mass media, and lobbying."[399] The introduction of the notion of "advocacy" marked an almost total abandonment of the "thousand flowers" idea. Instead of supporting many different NGOs, the notion of "advocacy" privileged a few, well-developed, professional, and "institutionally capable" organizations with good track records. These were the kinds of organizations that would facilitate "sustainability" and "phase out". The introduction of "advocacy" as well as the overall increase in the professionalization of civil society has made more recent civil society programs in Ukraine similar to those in other parts of the world.

In general, the more recent trends in USAID assistance show that it moved from granting the region an unconditional importance to trying to integrate it with other activities of the Agency. Overall, the discursive centers of "institutional capacity building" and "sustainability" highlight the idea that, rather than building civil society per se, civil society assistance should be based on a few targeted interventions aimed at creating and developing organizational structures that are professional and effective enough to implement assistance project activities, especially after the "phase out". The fact that the civil society assistance discourse draws on three different notions to sustain itself in effective ways shows that despite the seeming inflexibility and even arrogance of "assistance" it permits a considerable degree of adaptation and transformation. However, these adaptations are aimed at sustaining the core meaning of "assistance" rather than at questioning or substantially changing it.

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397 Teft, John. "Ukraine's Election: Next Steps/ Testimony before the House International Relations Committee." Washington, DC: US State Department, December 7, 2004.
398 USAID/Kiev. "Ukraine: Country Strategic Plan for FY 2003-2007".
399 Advocacy Institute. *Dovidnyk Z Advokasi* [Advocacy Manual], 2003, p.8.

4.3. Gender and Women's Issues: How Are They Defined?

4.3.1. Women as a target group: "Marginal and powerless"

The Office of Women in Development (WID) was established in 1974 "to help ensure that women participate fully and benefit equally from the US development assistance programs."[400] Similarly to other technical offices within USAID (e.g. the Center for Democracy and Governance) it is meant to be providing technical expertise on this particular (cross-cutting) issue to USAID bureaus and field missions and has no planning or budgetary authority. "WID is the focal point for technical expertise and leadership on gender issues, leading, advocating, and providing assistance in USAID as the Agency incorporates gender considerations into its programs."[401] As far as the "assistance" programs are concerned, the WID Office was never involved in their actual design or implementation. However, the "women in development" discourse played a role within USAID in terms of creating a space to raise "women's" and later "gender" issues as one of the priority areas. The content of "women in development" issues is well established and institutionally accepted. Attempts to (re)define "women's issues" in a particular context are often based on a dialogue with the "women in development" discourse, and some notions and tools are inevitably transferred from other contexts.

In this dissertation I focus particularly on the discursive center "women as a target group" that sustains the discourse of "women in development". It is based on two core ideas: first, women in their entirety form a group that shares certain characteristics and is overall underprivileged compared to men; and second, women as a group are particularly vulnerable and exposed to threats such as disease and criminal activity.

The main effect of the discursive center "women as a target group" is to support the view that women belong to the underprivileged and marginalized and that instead of aggravating these inequalities development aid should strive to help overcome them. This agenda is driven by a growing awareness of the problems that women in the so-called developing countries face, such as poor access to education, absence of property rights, health problems, and so on. One of the main recommendations developed is that women have to be given more assistance compared to men and to benefit from women-specific programs. From here a whole portfolio of programs targeting women has grown – micro-credits, trainings, educational programs – that is organized under the heading of "women in development".

However, the other side of the consolidation and institutionalization of the discourse of "women in development" is that by identifying a specific target group marked by lack and deviance it naturalizes those qualities. Women become defined in terms of being universally oppressed and underprivileged. The problematic nature of these notions is also understood within the WID bureau; however, such opinions are excluded by the discourse of "women in

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[400] USAID/WID. *About WID* [cited 10 August 2005. Available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/about_wid.html.

[401] USAID/WID. *About WID Activities* [cited 10 August 2005. Available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/activities/activities.html.

development". One of the former WID employees expressed a similar concern over the meaning of women as a target group: "It is another form of marginalization, another way of making it be about another underprivileged minority that did not get something."[402]

So how exactly are the connections maintained between the notions of "women as a target group", "women's issues", and "gender"? The following quote is instructive.

> The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) recognizes that *equal opportunity for women and men* is necessary not only for the well-being of their families but also because *women's involvement* is key to advancing economic and social development and promoting democracy. *Even today many women are not able to fully share* in the political and economic life of their societies. They face enduring economic, legal and customary barriers to their participation in development. In addition, in recent years the toll of *HIV/AIDS on women* and the abominable practice of *trafficking in women* and children have *held back women's progress* and that of their countries. The Agency addresses *gender inequalities* […]; *gender considerations* cut across all aspects of USAID programs.[403]

The paragraph above clearly illustrates the understanding of "gender inequalities" and "gender considerations" that the WID seeks to promote throughout the whole set of USAID programs. The WID promotes "equal opportunity for women and men" through improving the position of women both in terms of their increased participation in social, economic, and political life and in terms of protecting them from health and criminal threats. In other words, "equal opportunity" means upgrading women's status to that of men rather than ensuring equality of both women *and* men. "Gender inequalities" imply that one gender is made inferior to the other. As I have argued in chapters one and two, this essentializes positions of women and men in the society and in this way reinforces rather than ameliorates gender inequalities.

Another important dimension to such constructions of "gender", "women", and "men" is the emphasis on issues that render women particularly vulnerable and define them in the context of physical disability. Those issues are the HIV/AIDS pandemic and trafficking in women. I argue that the Agency focuses on these two issues as opposed to other, more locally specific issues of gender violence or of health risks due to their perceived global nature. This provides discursive alignment with the "global reach" orientation that characterizes American post-Cold War assistance and especially its direction in the aftermath of September 11. In this way, these specific issues are constructed in ways which link them to the perceived immediate strategic concerns of the US.

Such a "globalization" of the relevant issues is of consequence for how they are understood and defined, for it implies that women everywhere are affected by these issues in the same way. "Everywhere" of course refers to every aid/assistance recipient rather than indeed everywhere in the world. Thus, the divide is further maintained between those who are affected by disease or subjected to criminal activities and those who are not. The sharp distinction between the donor who develops "women's programs" and the aid/assistance

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[402] Lyday, 20 August 2004, interview by the author.
[403] USAID/WID. *Gender Matters: Integrating Gender - Achieving Results*. Washington, DC: WID IQC Brochure, 2002.

recipient who suffers from a problem contradicts the nature of those (global) issues and, thus, prevents their solution. In other words, if these issues are indeed global, they are the result of processes that are going on in different countries and of connections and mutual dependencies between countries that are rich and poor, or more or less democratic. One of such "global" issues that has been receiving considerable attention from USAID is the trafficking in women.

Trafficking in women was first introduced on the USAID agenda in the late 1990s and was seen as a problem that is particularly acute in the fSU. In 1998 the Global Survival Network (no longer active) presented the results of a two-year undercover investigation into the trafficking of women for prostitution from Russia and the Newly Independent States in the form of a final report entitled *Crime & Servitude: An Expose in the Traffic in Women for Prostitution from the Newly Independent States*, and a 42-minute documentary video entitled *Bought & Sold*. In addition, the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement was increasingly concerned with the interconnections between organized crime, drug trafficking, trafficking in weapons, and trafficking in human beings. By now assistance to combat these issues is growing; for example, as of 2004, the Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues reported that eight out of eleven initiatives it was supporting throughout the world had to do with supporting women in war and conflict zones and fighting the spread of violence against and trafficking of women.[404]

In her remarks to the organization Women in International Security, Paola J. Dobriansky, Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs, made a connection between women and "global" or "transnational" threats and the issue of American security. It was argued that women are part of the "drugs, bugs, and thugs" threat to national security. They fall victim to transnational threats that are either illegal or contagious. Infectious diseases, such as SARS, avian flu or HIV/AIDS then "cause both direct harm to the health and well-being of those infected and ancillary *damage to societies and economies.*" Drawing on the National Intelligence Reports she emphasized the fact that these diseases "endanger US citizens at home and abroad, threaten US armed forces deployed overseas, and exacerbate social and political *instability in key countries and regions*, in which the US has significant interests." In a similar vein,

> crimes like trafficking in persons can contribute to a vicious cycle of collapsing order and increasing criminality that *destabilizes states and even regions,* [… and] the forced prostitution that is frequently related to trafficking in persons can expedite the spread of HIV, TB, and other diseases.

Further, the connection is made to drug trafficking, "a well-known cousin of trafficking in persons [that] sets in motion a vicious cycle of corruption and violence and can ultimately *weaken states* and give rise to *elements that threaten our security and also that of our allies and friends.*"[405]

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[404] US Department of State. "US International Women's Issues Initiatives: Fact Sheet." Washington, DC: Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues, May 18, 2004.
[405] Dobriansky, Paola J. "Bugs, Drugs, and Thugs: Dealing with Transnational Threats/ Remarks to Women in International Security." Washington, DC: US State Department, May 12, 2004, emphasis added.

What is important here is the connection to such key elements as the recently introduced US government concept of "failing states" and their implications for international security. An idea has been recently reinforced that US security is dependent on maintaining stability globally and intervening in the "failing states" whose collapse can potentially create a threat. As can be seen very well from the concluding paragraph of the same speech:

> What is important is that we have grasped the importance of *transnational issues*, and with others, we seek to resolve these *global problems*. Our ability to meet these challenges will bear heavily on *international security and prosperity* […]; our tasks are to recognize how critical these issues are, to see their direct correlation to our security and overall well-being, and to continue to work for their resolution.[406]

This points to an important shift that took place over the past decade of assistance – assistance is no longer only about giving aid to a particular country or region, it is about "global" interference to maintain order and stability. The strategic alignment of the most recent discursive change within USAID with these larger discursive shifts in US foreign policy more generally helps strengthen the discursive center of "women as a target group" that is particularly vulnerable.

According to one of the former employees of the WID, maintaining a close connection with the core US foreign policy concerns has always been characteristic of the discourse and practice of the organization.

> I think that women's issues resonate very deeply with the core of USAID internal politics. That's something people like, that's something that's very easy to do, that's something that appeals to the right-wing and to the left-wing. An office like WID has less to do with what is needed overseas than with what is needed here in Washington.[407]

Even though the particular institutional politics of the WID back in Washington do not translate directly into women's programs in Ukraine, due to the technical advisor status of this office, its programs are representative of the meaning of "women" and "gender" that is dominant within the assistance discourse in Washington DC.

4.3.2. Women's empowerment through NGOs

As a direct consequence of the meaning of "women as a target group" discussed above, the notion of "women's empowerment" has a particular meaning in this context. The assistance discourse maintains that women are empowered by being provided with a women-specific

406 Ibid., emphasis added.
407 Lyday, 20 August 2004, interview by the author.

realm, such as an NGO sector. Thus, women's high levels of participation in civil society programs is discussed in highly positive terms. From the very beginning of assistance in Ukraine, women were more actively involved in many programs and initiatives than men. In fact, the civil society programs were and still are largely dominated by women. Many USAID officials have singled that out to remark upon:

> What was different were the local women themselves, who organized very quickly; they were very vocal, very articulate, mostly well educated. My experience as a whole was that Ukrainian women definitely wanted the change and they were prepared from very early on to get organized and work towards it. As a general concept I found women much more reform-minded than men. Many men benefited from the old system, they were little concerned about the reform, they were more cautious.[408]

Another report about the NIS Exchange and Training Program (NET), which began in 1993 and consisted in sending Ukrainians to the US for trainings, states:

> A recent NET project evaluation shows that women find the training experience more positive than men, and are more likely to be expected to return with new ideas to the workplace. Women returnees appear to have received more increases in job responsibilities upon return from NET trainings.[409]

Drawing on the "women in development" discourse, USAID saw the feminization of NGOs as a sign of women's empowerment and a guarantee that "women's" issues would be addressed.

> Stronger NGO sectors appear especially to benefit *women and minority groups*, as well as to be *naturally* reflective of social concerns and public policy issues important to women and *minorities*. Although NGO sector support programs that the Agency [USAID] has sponsored in CEE/NIS countries were not initially designed to emphasize women's issues, they have been effective in responding to them. […] Most NGOs appear to provide equitable professional opportunities to women. […] For women especially, NGOs have provided a vehicle of self-expression, an opportunity to take leadership roles, and a mechanism for dealing with pertinent social issues.[410]

As is evident from the quote above, the discourse of "women in development" is based on the idea that women are not "good enough" (even if for social and political reasons) to express themselves in the same spheres as men. So the idea emerged that women have to be provided with their own public space, in which exclusively by virtue of being women they will address the kinds of social problems that are otherwise overlooked in the society. The

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[408] Turner, 17 August 2004, interview by author.
[409] USAID/West NIS. "Ukraine: Results Review and Resource Request ".
[410] USAID. "Lessons in Implementation", p.5-10.

following quote captures this essentialist notion of women being a marginalized but "naturally" better and more socially responsible group. According to USAID, the civil society sector

> […] offers women one of the few avenues currently available to them to promote broad-scale socioeconomic change, not just change connected with women's issues. It is a sector that is relatively devoid of corruption. This is attractive both because of women's dislike of corruption *per se* and concern about physical harm.[411]

Perhaps in an unintended way, this gendered perception of the "civil society" sector contradicts the expectation of a high social and political impact of civil society, and thus the idea of empowerment itself. Defining "civil society" as a realm for those who cannot fulfill themselves in other spheres gives it the aura of a specialized and secluded realm. The contribution of civil society to the overall democratization of society is then no longer seen in its direct impact on "mainstream" social and political developments. Instead, it is much more indirect because it consists of providing special opportunities for those who would not get them elsewhere. Keeping a particular segment of the population happy is no doubt beneficial for the society as a whole, and yet it is unlikely to contribute to substantial democratic transformation or to address deeper issues that are at the heart of social inequalities, be those due to gender or to other factors.

4.4. Conclusion

4.4.1. What it means to assist

The discourse of "assistance" emerged out of a sense of urgency to act in a world that was rapidly transforming as a result of the end of the Cold War. Understanding this impulse at its origin is important for understanding its limitations. "Assistance" did not develop as a response to particular problems that needed to be resolved, even if it presents itself as a force capable of "making a difference" for developments in other countries. Instead, "assistance" developed as a response to the political imperative to spend money in the part of the world previously closed to any intervention by the infamous Iron Curtain. This points to a fundamental problem not unknown to philanthropy in general: Being created as a response to an opportunity to spend money – even if for a "good cause" - makes any "good cause" secondary to the need to create an infrastructure that would facilitate the spending.

The notion of "assistance" itself was introduced to emphasize the novelty of the programs implemented in the former Soviet Block as well as their differences from the

[411] Ibid., 23.

development "aid" administered elsewhere. It conceived of the political changes that occurred in the late 1980s in terms of unique opportunities it offered to the US government to exert influence over the development of its former Cold War rival countries. The novelty of the assistance discourse necessitated new answers to the core questions of assistance: who should support whom, how, and why. I have shown how these questions were addressed through a set of discursive and institutional measures. The discourse defined and enabled the creation of new assistance institutions as well as made it possible to accommodate some of the already existing ones, such as experts and programs from other parts of the world. I have shown that it is the core meaning of "assistance" itself that made this continuity possible. The discourse of "assistance" also introduced new political geographies, into which the recipients of assistance were placed. In the newly constructed "region" of assistance Ukraine was given a prominent place.

However, the discourse of "assistance" is less specific about how exactly assistance programs have to be designed and what exactly they are to achieve. I argue that this vagueness of "assistance" is key to its successful functioning over a relatively long period of time and under conditions of rapid political change and overall instability in the former Soviet Block. As I show in chapters five and six, its concrete content is filled into the "assistance" category in other sites of interaction – in Kiev and at local NGOs. Such vagueness or emptiness of the assistance discourse – rather than being just an initial stage – became one of its founding principles and determined a set of core ideas concerning ways of assisting civil society in Ukraine.

"Assistance" as "teaching" and expertise transfer implies that countries that "assist" already hold the knowledge of "proper" development and have the right conception of "civil society", which they then pass onto the assistance recipients. From the very beginning of "assistance" onward, "transition" has been defined as a temporary period of change whose nature and destination are assumed to be well-understood and clearly defined. Thus, "assistance" is meant to be a purely technical input that will give this change a push and introduce the right tools to go further; it has never been seen as a longer-term commitment. It is for this reason that early "phase out", somewhat ironically, has been an immediate goal from the very beginning of "assistance" and remained so for more than a decade. In a way, this has turned short-term intervention into a permanent state of "assistance", thus re-enforcing the understanding of long-term processes in a short-term way.

4.4.2. What it means to promote civil society through assistance

Although the idea of promoting democracy was not entirely new to US assistance, the prominence given to the notion of civil society within the assistance discourse is unprecedented. The assistance discourse in fact played a significant role in the (re)invention of the idea of civil society. The civil society assistance discourse is based on three main discursive centers: "institutional capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability". "Institutional capacity building" means enabling the setting up and development of particular organizational

structures – NGOs - and training them in key procedures. Since these kinds of organizations were non-existent at the beginning of "assistance", "capacity building" was defined in terms of reaching out to a wide audience of actual and potential leaders of different organizational forms. This idea of spreading out widely was captured by the metaphor "let a thousand flowers bloom", which made the initial civil society assistance look different from the civil society programs implemented in other "regions". However, I would argue that this initial take was less different from the promotion of civil society elsewhere than it might at first seem. Importantly, the "flowers" that were invited to bloom in Ukraine and elsewhere in the region were all of the same kind, and the openness of this discourse did not go beyond allowing anyone to join in the space that was already externally defined. This is evident from the highly technical nature of civil society assistance defined through the discursive center of "institutional capacity building". In fact, creating "institutionally capable" NGOs was not just an initial stage in civil society assistance but its founding principle and primary content that remained at the core of the discourse throughout the whole period I investigated. Assistance has evolved from building up basic "organizational capacity" towards introducing more sophisticated tools and techniques, such as "advocacy". Its technical nature, however, remains intact. This means that even in the "thousand flowers" period civil society assistance was not aimed at promoting an open playing field for civil society groups of different kinds and ideologies. Neither had the relevance of the NGO "flowers" for the Ukrainian context been made into an issue to be addressed by assistance.

The technical nature of civil society assistance is particularly prominent in the discussion of the "sustainability" of the newly emerging/created civil society. The discursive center of "sustainability" endorsed the idea that after NGOs are created they have to be trained to become professional enough to take over the functions fulfilled by their American counterparts. This led to an increase in professional trainings for NGOs towards the year 2000. Instead of promoting a "thousand flowers", USAID is now developing programs to strengthen think tanks, resource centers, and advocacy NGOs – all being defined as organizations with highly skilled staff that provides technical expertise in the areas related to "assistance". In the context of a permanent "phase out", the "sustainability" of Ukrainian civil society is thus understood in terms of the capacity of Ukrainian NGOs to facilitate "assistance".

The paternalistic conception of assistance as top-down teaching implied that the donor reserved the right to decide not only who but also what had to be taught. The relationship between the ones who know and the ones who have to be taught was further sustained through the discursive center of "empowerment". It consisted of three key elements: the notion of "social transition issues" that defined Ukrainians as being in a dramatic state of disarray because of the social and economic difficulties transition entailed; the notion of information and awareness raising that implied that Ukrainians were disapproving of the reform because they lacked information about its virtues; and the notion of the wrong mentality that Ukrainians were said to have developed during the oppressive Soviet period and

that seemed to be in the way of their fully embracing the promise of transition to democracy and market economy. On the basis of these three core notions, "empowerment" is defined as education towards embracing the new ideals offered by "assistance" and liberation from the legacies of the past that may be in the way. The heavy emphasis on mentality change implied that there was something inherently wrong with the way Ukrainians thought of themselves and of their opportunities and responsibilities, and thus it constructed the demand for being taught. Even more importantly, it downgraded locally grown ideas about civil society and activism as stemming from the dark communist past. In other words, if Ukrainians were more interested in other issues or different forms of activism deemed inappropriate by "assistance", the wrong Soviet mentality must have been responsible.

The discursive center of "empowerment" enabled the civil society assistance discourse to address concerns about problems and failures of a structural nature without actually offering structural solutions or taking an explicitly political stand. It helped redefine socio-economic and political inequalities in terms of individual emotional and psychological problems and move them to the realm of "cultural" or "mentality" issues. In her analysis of women's health projects implemented by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Russia, Michele Rivkin-Fish makes a similar observation about the workings of "cultural" arguments in assistance: "Seeing the problems as based in the need for emotional revival worked to deny the fact that problems of power inequalities […] were products of larger political processes and arrangements."[412]

I argue that recognition of and attention to local politics in the broad sense of the word would be a crucial starting point from which assistance could develop programs that would indeed empower Ukrainians to address their problems. However, this will not happen if assistance systematically and perhaps even purposefully overlooks those inequalities in the first place.

4.4.3. What it means to empower women

The women's agenda sustained in Washington is largely driven by the "women in development" discourse dating to the 1970s. Although it is not directly applied to "assistance", it still has a strong formative power. Most of the women's programs developed for "assistance" are based on the "women in development" discourse, which is sustained by the discursive center of "women as a target group". The latter constructs women as a generally underprivileged and marginalized group that is defined by its shared experience of oppression and violence against its members. This also implies defining women as an unproblematically uniform category. In other words, once a women's issue is defined it is implied that all women

[412] Michele Rivkin-Fish, "Health Development Meets the End of State Socialism: Visions of Democratization, Women's Health, and Social Well-Being for Contemporary Russia," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 24, no. 1 (2000): p.98.

in the target region are affected by it in the same way. Moreover, the women in the target region are implicitly juxtaposed to those from the assisting countries. This discursive center is more recently reinforced within USAID through its connection to the discourse on "global threats and security". To make this connection explicit, a particular emphasis is laid on the issues of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and of trafficking, both having a stronger "global" connotation than any other issue related to women's health or exposure to violence. This new global system of meanings implies that women in "other" countries that are in need of assistance are particularly vulnerable because they can fall victim not only to domestic forms of violence and oppression but also to transnational threats. Transnationality, however, is not taken as far as to include more developed, "assisting" countries in the picture when solutions to the threats observed are sought.

The discursive center of "women as a target group" is central for the ideas related to women's empowerment that are sustained in Washington DC. It is believed that women's empowerment arises from a women-specific forum for self-realization and action. Rather than addressing the structural gender problems in the society as a whole, this discourse tends to show preference for creating a "ghetto"-like space that would be available only to women, in which they could safely practice social activism. Assistance assigns this role to the NGO sector, whose feminized nature is defined as a sign of women's empowerment – the more women are engaged in NGO work, the more empowered they are believed to be as a whole.

The notion of gender, even though present within the organizational discourse of USAID, did not form a discursive center. It was incorporated as a response to the increased use of the term in policy-making internationally (as, for example, with respect to "gender mainstreaming") but has not to this date gained the power to structure the discourse on women and women's issues in the context of assistance. However, it is one of the terms that was introduced to the recipient countries as part of the "assistance" language, and thus it is part of the language shared among (or at least known by) professionals in both Washington DC and Ukraine. I will look more into the life of the notion of "gender" in Kiev in the following chapter (section 5.3).

In this chapter I have outlined the origins of the civil society assistance discourse and the core discursive centers that define it. I have particularly focused on continuities within USAID organizational discourse and practice. I have shown that despite the overall emphasis on the novelty and unprecedented nature of "assistance", "old" ideas and practices were successfully incorporated into "assistance" as well. I have also stressed several points of ambiguity or instances of vague meaning that are evident in the core discursive centers. In the following chapter, I will show how the civil society assistance discourse is filled with more specific meanings as a result of intense East – West interactions that take place in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, between USAID representatives and Ukrainian mediators and recipients of "assistance".

Chapter 5: In Kiev. Points of Mediation

Being the capital city of Ukraine, Kiev is a meeting point for a range of actors, such as the USAID Mission, American NGO subcontractors and implementing partners, and Ukrainians that work as local staff or at NGOs that administer assistance. Standing in between assistance suppliers and recipients, Kiev is best characterized as a point of mediation between the US assistance policy and its reception by and implementation in the local context of Ukrainian NGOs. The implementation of assistance programs has been dependent on local expertise or at least technical support. American subcontractors needed local partners as well as local staff. That is why Kiev is not just a point of transfer of funds from the donor to the recipient, but a meeting point for American and Ukrainian mediators of assistance. It is one of the most salient sites of (re)enactment of the assistance discourse.

USAID opened its Missions in Moscow (to serve operations in Russia), Kiev (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova), Yerevan (TransCaucasus region) and Almaty (Central Asia) in 1993.[413] Initially, those were maintained by only one or two American members of staff assisted by a few local employees. The budget appropriations were made for the whole of the NIS and the programs were planned and controlled from Washington DC. By the mid-1990s this changed: the local missions received bigger budgetary authority and started planning and implementing their own grant programs within the overall budget that would be appropriated by the US Congress per country. Missions could do their own procurement work and solicit proposals. This is significant because there was gradually more decision making power coming out of the actual interactions between the Americans and the Ukrainians working at and with the Mission.

An important element of assistance is the group of subcontractors and implementing partners that work with USAID within a certain assistance category. According to the regulations, the US government assistance rarely goes directly to organizations in the recipient country; much more often there is a bidding procedure among American subcontractors. The subcontractors work either on the basis of contracts, including so-called indefinite quantity contracts (IQC), or on the basis of grants and cooperative agreements.[414] In the area of democracy and civil society assistance most of the work is done on the basis of grants and cooperative agreements. This means that subcontractors compete not only on the basis of their rates and quality of services but also on the basis of their proposals, in which they try to

[413] USAID. "Fact Sheet: USAID NIS Task Force Activities in the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union." Washington DC: USAID: Office of External Affairs, June 1993.

[414] The contracts (including indefinite quantity contracts) are contracts for doing specific types and amounts of work that are awarded to (mostly) for-profit organizations after a bidding procedure; cooperative agreements are essentially grants.

match their best selling points and expertise with the priorities of USAID. Thus, the subcontractors play an important role in the actual process of program design. There is also observable continuity between the programs they are implementing in different parts of the world. Before the USAID Mission in Kiev gained more responsibilities and planning authority over the field, the subcontractors and implementing partners had been key in running the programs on the ground. These organizations were among the first to start doing work in the field; this turned them into bearers of knowledge and expertise in particularly high demand.

According to the Bakhtinian framework of dialogical discourse analysis, this site of interaction is characterized by the highest level of (re)negotiation based on immediate personal encounters between representatives of the "assistance" discourse and locals. Importantly, these encounters take place within the confines of the assistance discourse rather than on a "neutral" territory. This implies that the roles of participants are divided between "insiders" and "outsiders" to the discourse. In the first section of this chapter I uncover the meaning of mediating assistance that developed through interactions between Americans and Ukrainians in Kiev. This meaning is embedded in the discursive center of the "world/ international community" as a shared space for joint effort from both sides. I argue that this discursive center is constitutive of an identity change among both Americans and Ukrainians. For Americans it involved a shift towards becoming "global" rather than domestic NGOs, while for Ukrainians it implied socialization into a new internationally recognized profession. In the second section, I explore how this meaning of mediating assistance is reflected in the transformations of the three discursive centers of the civil society assistance discourse – "capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability". The third section explores the transformation of ideas about gender and women's issues.

5.1. Assistance: "East Joins West for Change"?

One of the early programs implemented in Ukraine through Winrock International, an American NGOs subcontracting women's programs from USAID, had the following subtitle: "East joins West for Change." This slogan is largely representative of the assistance discourse that developed in Kiev. It implies a shared effort towards a common goal, in which the West knows how the goal can be achieved and the East joins in. Thus, even though the aspiration is the same, the contributions of the two sides are different. These ideas are further embedded in the discursive center of the "world/ international community".

The concept of the "world/ international community", as it is used in the assistance discourse, was created by Americans, many of whom saw this new West–East dialogue as an opportunity to expand their activities to the "global" scale. For example, Counterpart International is one of the key USAID subcontractors in the area of civil society assistance. The organization was registered in 1965 as a New York-based Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (FSP), dedicated to the rehabilitation, welfare, and growth of the Pacific islands after the Second World War. It continued working exclusively in the Pacific Region

until 1992, when its whole image and direction of work were changed. The Board of Directors decided to expand the organization's activities and to move its headquarters to Washington DC, thus positioning the organization in a new way. It received its present name – Counterpart International, and its new mission statement is worded in a more global language: "Counterpart's mission of building *One Just World* through service and partnership – helping people to help themselves to create a more ecologically and socially sustainable world." By now Counterpart boasts experience in "some 60 countries around the world […] and the number is growing."[415] The first "global" move Counterpart International made was to Ukraine in 1993, where it stayed for almost a decade as one of the biggest USAID subcontractors for civil society assistance. In the late 1990s it expanded further in the post-Soviet space to the countries of Central Asia. More recently, it bid successfully for development projects in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Another US-based NGO, Winrock International, is exemplary in many ways; an NGO from Arkansas known for its work in the area of agriculture, it went "global" in 1985 when it initiated its agriculture programs in the Third World. The way it became known in the former Soviet Union as a women's NGO is puzzling at the first sight. In 1989 the leadership development project of Winrock in Africa was led by Elise Fiber-Smith, who made it a successful project by connecting different women's groups under the heading of women's empowerment. The success of this program gave her a mandate to expand its geographical scope, and she was among the first representatives of American NGOs who went to the former Soviet Union. Having participated in a series of conferences on women in transition, Elise Fiber-Smith started joint initiatives with representatives of Russian and Ukrainian women's organizations. In this case, the heading of "women's empowerment" proved to be a good term that connected the development experience of Winrock with the new opportunities to expand into the post-Soviet space.

The assistance discourse created a new space for different NGOs to redefine their activities and experience in universally applicable terms that frame them as having appeal and importance for "the whole world". This also meant, however, that the applicability of these concepts and methods for the Ukrainian context was asserted before there was time to learn more about it.

These tendencies are organized by the discursive center of "world/ international community" that framed the interaction between Americans and Ukrainians in Kiev. This discursive center embodies the desire of both sides to establish a common ground. Based on the concept of "world/ international community", the Westerners see assistance as a way to socialize Ukrainians into their world of projects and fundraising. The Ukrainians see assistance as a channel to (re)enter the "world/ international community" by acquiring the tools and skills that are in demand internationally.

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[415] Counterpart International. "Counterpart Millennium Report." Washington, DC: Counterpart International, 2000.

The idea of assistance is that Ukrainians are provided not only with resources as such but also with access to information about where and how these resources can be obtained. What the Americans working on the ground were bringing was the expertise they themselves had in fitting into the world of assistance and handling the challenges and requirements it entails. In the words of Sarah Tisch, former coordinator of the NIS-US Women's Consortium that was formed with the help of Winrock International,

> there were women's groups organizing amongst themselves but our *role was to get the Western resources for them.* Clearly, if they were organized on their own they had no money […]; civil society organizations had no place to turn but the outside […]; our job was to make all that happen, so it was the facilitating role.[416]

In addition to the idea of sharing resources, the discursive center of "world/ international community" includes the idea of a shared policy language. Americans have a role in translating Ukrainian issues into this language, whereas Ukrainians struggle to accommodate the "assistance" language. Many of the concepts used in assistance discourse have no equivalents in Russian or Ukrainian; they are either used in their English versions, such as "advocacy" or "gender", substituted by a descriptive term, as is the case with "awareness raising" or "outreach", or Ukrainian terms have been found for them, which, however, remain very new and unclear, such as empowerment – *upovnovazhennia*, or sustainable development – *stalyi rozvytok*. It is believed to be important to introduce the key terms into assistance contexts, even if they have no equivalents in the respective languages, because sharing a term creates an entry point for models and procedures. The difficulties as well as the necessity of translation are captured in the following quote from a Ukrainian with more than a decade of experience in mediating assistance:

> We had Americans, we had someone from the Diaspora in our office, and yet we spent a whole month trying to translate "advocacy" and "outreach" and we failed, although we could understand what those notions meant […]; then we gathered our first grantees for a training and they said: we don't know the term advocacy but we are doing it […]; the term is important because if people give a name to what they do, they start doing it differently, they use different tools.[417]

The discursive center of "world/ international community" helps to socialize its new Ukrainian members into assistance discourse and practice. The Western mediators of assistance see their role as one of sharing the professional knowledge, introducing the skills and the language that determine whether an NGO will be able approach donors with successful projects. The Ukrainians who are involved with assistance are eager to prove that

[416] Tisch, 23 August 2004, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[417] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author.

they can be just as "professional" as their Western partners in using the language and the tools.

> When we conduct trainings, presentations or other events, we explain that we want to be part of the international community. That is why it is important for us to know all this terminology in English. We need it to be able to communicate, to write, to understand – without it *professionalism* is impossible.[418]

"World/ international community" is not a shared place strictly speaking; rather, the Americans are the representatives who see their role akin to that of missionaries. An example from my interview about the 1998 Trafficking Prevention Program mentions two leaders, one of whom was very enthusiastic about the project but proved "not realistic with money", whereas the other turned out to be "too independent". As one interviewee put it: "I have my own constraints: people who give money have their priorities; she [the NGO leader] was too independent, which is good, but then if she wants to be that independent why doesn't she find her own money?" As a result, both organizations were dropped from the list of project partners. The Americans felt that their role was not just simple resource transfer but also mediation of assistance rules and requirements. Their knowledge of the assistance world was one of the key areas of expertise they could and wanted to offer: "… The donors were holding us responsible. So on all the paperwork it had to be [us] instead of the consortium leaders, because we were the channel through which the money came."[419]

The inequality between the American and the Ukrainian parts of the new "world/ international community" has always been exacerbated by their unequal access to resources. As one of the former Winrock employees recalls her experience in Ukraine:

> The discussion was also perceived as to be about "where the money should go"; people smell the money […]; it's easy to be the rich one in the room, us naïve Americans asking about what has to be done. But people don't say: this is not our thing, we won't do it. They say of course we could learn how to do it.[420]

On the other side, some Ukrainians felt that the line between sharing knowledge and being arrogant and disrespectful had been crossed by some of their American colleagues. They were very sensitive to being intentionally kept in a position of less qualified little sisters. One of my respondents recalls:

> If we did not know something, this did not mean that we would never learn. It also did not mean that we were incapable of understanding that, even though our colleagues declared that they were listening to us, in practice they were not.

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[418] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[419] Tisch, 23 August 2004, interview by the author.
[420] Scott, 1 October 2004, interview by the author.

> I personally felt as if I had been exchanging one yoke for another. And this was not what I expected from new initiatives.[421]

However, the notion of "world/ international community" is not a static entity; it changes as the terms of the American-Ukrainian interaction change. Over the period under study, a substantial number of Ukrainians have been socialized into assistance discourse and practice and thereby also acquired a stronger claim over the "world/ international community". Increasingly, Ukrainians talk about the importance of having a say in the choice of priorities and themes that are supported by the donor. Remarkable in this context is an event that took place on 29 and 30 September 2004 in Kiev: the Ukrainian National Conference on *Ethics Guidelines for the Third Sector* organized and sponsored within the framework of the USAID-funded project "Ukrainian Community Action Network" (UCAN). The idea of the conference can hardly be claimed to be "home-grown"; rather it is a follow-up on similar events taking place in other countries (the Czech Republic and Slovakia being particularly prominent examples). Neither is the idea exclusively native to civil society or even the Third Sector; it is also adopted in other sectors and is increasingly part of various professional codes. In fact, one of the presentations at the conference was dedicated to "Developing Professional Ethics Codes for PR Specialists."

Adopting ethics codes is also a topical issue for the donors, as is evident, for example, from the recent activities of the Ukrainian Forum of Donors. The forum is an informal assembly of donors and administrators of assistance operating in Ukraine, which resembles similar formats in other countries. These different forums meet within the framework of annual East European Donors Meetings that have taken place since 1996. The main goals of the forum are to improve coordination between donor organizations and to raise the professional standard of their work. Every forum has adopted its own ethical code. And so the idea that Ukrainian NGOs gather to discuss ethical standards not only has its origins outside of the NGO community but is also a way to pick up an initiative going on in other countries. This event closely reflects the discursive center of the "world/ international community" in that it is based on the aspiration to follow the most recent trends in the world of assistance and beyond.

There are several features, however, that made this conference stand out among other donor-inspired ideas and events. First, instead of announcing the conference from the start, UCAN worked for two years on engaging different NGOs in a dialogue about whether or not and in what form they would like to address the issue of ethics. Second, most of these activities were not funded and, thus, depended mostly on the initiative and enthusiasm of different local NGOs. Third, the majority of participants were Ukrainian, including the representatives of granting agencies. Such participatory planning created a format in which the actual forum for discussion became as important as the (externally introduced) issue.

[421] Suslova, 11 April 2005, interview by the author.

The resulting discussion is very interesting for the variety of re-interpretations, contestations, and discursive openings it contained. It reached out to such fundamental questions as what the assistance is meant for and how to improve it. The failures of assistance were framed as a shared problem of those who tend to abuse donors' funds as well as the donors themselves, whose lack of context-sensitive programming is harmful, unprofessional, and irresponsible. The question of why and how NGOs have to be ethical was broadened in a variety of ways that can be seen as openings in the donor-driven discourse on NGOs.

At the panel discussion "Ethics of the Relationships between Donors and Civil Society Organizations" participants were on several occasions employing the distinction between "donors", i.e. foreign governments and private bodies that were actually giving the funds, and "administrators of assistance", i.e. those who actually administer and distribute assistance. As one of the participants explained:

> There are programs and priorities, and there is the actual implementation – the latter can be influenced. You can implement the programs in a stupid straightforward way as the donor tells you or you can say "no, this is not a good way." You can influence the donor by saying that for *this* country and under *these* conditions this is not going to work.[422]

Here the mediators of assistance are entrusted with much agency in that they are perceived as a capable and legitimate agent of change and influence in the world of assistance. This is very recent rethinking. In the beginning of assistance to Ukraine the main divisions were between those who were giving funds and those asking for them. In a sense, Ukrainians working at subcontractors' offices were also on the side of the recipients of assistance, since they were only there to learn and to be paid for fulfilling certain tasks rather than to participate or innovate in the program design.

The recent rethinking of this division has much to do with the fact that the number of Ukrainians distributing assistance and implementing donor projects as well as their technical expertise have increased over the past decade. The emergence of the new "assistance elite" – Ukrainians professionally doing assistance – led to the emergence of the new idea that the donors have to be influenced and that Ukrainian concerns have to be communicated more forcefully in the assistance dialogue. As one of the Ukrainians said: "our task is to make sure that the donors – seeing all the failures – do not tell us that our country is hopeless; we have to communicate to them, to work to improve the programs together." It is interesting that the consolidation of the Ukrainian assistance elite leads to the emergence of a new discourse on the quality and professionalism of assistance and on the responsibility that various assistance professionals have. Another participant of the Ethics Conference underlined:

> It is important for donor organizations to practice what they preach […]; there should be no situations when a donor is imposing its own idea, its own narrow

[422] UCAN. "Ukrainian National Conference "Ethics Guidelines for the Third Sector" (CD)." Kiev: UCAN, September 29-30, 2004, emphasis in the original.

> specialized projects and programs on an NGO because donors should follow their own ethic norms and stick to the principle "resources are ours – ideas are yours." […] There should be open initiatives accessible to everyone: if a donor can find the *clients* for it, it's fine; if not, this means the initiative is bad.[423]

Here the notion of competition is placed in a new context: it is not only the NGOs that have to deliver quality and compete for donors' projects but also the donors, whose ideas have to be vindicated by the local interest. Ethical standards, it is argued by another participant, have to be applied not only to the NGOs but also to the donors themselves. Iaryna Borenko noted: "Donors are responsible as professionals to have ethical norms; in their professional behavior they have to adhere to certain ethical principles."[424] Some concerns are even voiced as to whether or not the concept of "professional ethics" should be applied to NGOs at all. Another participant explained:

> If we aim at adopting the professional ethics code, it means that we exclude certain kinds of people, for example, those who work in the civil society aside to a different kind of job. This would mean that we choose to enhance the current tendency of professionalization of the civil society, but maybe we need mechanisms to keep civil society more open as a sector.[425]

The notion of "world/ international community" is re-thought in that it is no longer primarily seen as a prescription to be followed but rather as a way to qualify and become eligible. This means that once Ukrainians felt they had gained that status, they started to create more openings around the questions of what priorities to follow and which assistance programs should continue in the longer term. The need to learn the concepts and procedures of "assistance" is legitimized with the discursive center of "world/ international community"; however, the applicability of those concepts and procedures is kept an open question. Another participant of the ethics conference argued:

> The *knowledge* that has been accumulated in the world is so big. Maybe the ideas that the donors introduce do not work for Ukraine now but we will get there; maybe in a year, maybe more we will want to use this knowledge. However, we always have to ask the donors why they think this is a good thing for Ukraine.[426]

Here again, the connection to the "world/ international community" is a way to present particular ideas (note that they are here referred to as knowledge) as important; however, their relevance and applicability to the context are left open. It is up to Ukrainians to develop at their own speed and to see whether or not and when these ideas will fit them. In the next

[423] Ibid.
[424] Ibid.
[425] Ibid.
[426] Ibid., emphasis added.

section I look at whether or not the core discursive centers that define civil society were accepted, transformed, or rejected altogether as they "traveled" from Washington DC to Kiev.

5.2. Civil Society: Insiders or Outsiders?

5.2.1. Capacity building: How to become "professional"

The fact that NGOs in Ukraine first had to be created and then supported led to particular developments. Civil society assistance budgets are not meant to be spent on one big project. In line with the "thousand flowers" metaphor, as discussed in chapter four, the idea is to reach out to as many recipients as possible and to support as many small activities as possible. To accommodate this idea within the assistance bureaucracy USAID relies on intermediaries who receive an annual budget to be distributed in this way. For example, in the early 1990s the US government established the Eurasia Foundation, through which it was distributing most of its small grants mostly geared towards civil society. The idea was to extend small amounts of money to many different groups.

One of the core activities of Winrock International in the 1990s was also the distribution of seed grants to women's NGOs in the NIS. Starting in 1994 the Seed Grants program was run by Winrock in Moscow on the basis of a USD 95,000 grant from the Eurasia Foundation and later a grant of around half a million dollars from USAID. Seed grants were ranging in size from USD 500 to USD 5,000. There were several application rounds per year that were assessed by a board comprised of Winrock staff and representatives of local women's NGOs with a ratio of 4:3 (local members on a rotation basis). The eligibility criteria included that the organization had to be a registered women's NGO, with special consideration given to applications from the region, i.e. not based in the capital or a big city, and to NGOs that had never received a grant before. Giving priority to newly established organizations remained one of the key principles throughout the whole period of the NIS-US Women's Consortium activities. The idea behind distributing seed grants was to give organizations a push, to spread the word among the groups with a potential to become a women's NGO rather than investing in long-term partnerships with a few organizations. Several Winrock coordinators highlighted that the rationale for seed grants was to support as many women's groups as possible "to be able to see who was there to work with."

So in Kiev the "thousand flowers" approach was also a matter of practicality: the subcontractors simply did not know with whom to work. As Katie Fox, one of the current NDI staff who worked in Ukraine in the early 1990s, explained: "The 'big seminar' approach was good: we used to invite up to forty people and then out of those there [would be] five or ten we could actually work with."[427] For the NDI as well as most other subcontractors,

[427] Fox, 9 August 2004, interview by the author.

spreading support to many organizations was a way to "research" the field they knew nothing about and to establish local partners with whom they could continue working on more specific programs.

The overall workings of the discursive center of "capacity building" in Kiev are captured in the following quote:

> … The Russian and Ukrainian women at the time had very little exposure to the outside – how could they? … So our job was to *help these groups make connections and also make them more professional* so that they could hold their own with other western women's coalitions, and that means that they had transparent operating procedures, that they could be *audited*, that they had democratic rules, vote on the president, have a budget, everybody would contribute and so a lot of it was *building the capacity of those organizations*. To work together through this umbrella organization and also by virtue of belonging to the umbrella organization, they would take some of the things that they were learning and apply them to their own organizations to make them *more fundable and more attractive* not only to foreign donors but also to what we hoped would be a growing group of Ukrainian philanthropists.[428]

Seed grants are a tool for "capacity building" that has, besides just a technical, also a socializing effect. The guidelines and requirements for seed grants were largely borrowed from the small grants program of the Global Fund for Women. The idea was that during the application and selection procedure women would learn the appropriate procedures and could apply for grants from other foundations on their own. Moreover, with the permission of the applicant, proposals not selected for a seed grant but receiving a favorable review were forwarded to other grant-making agencies. In such a way, women's groups would be socialized into the "assistance industry": rules of operation for NGOs, fund raising procedures, and so on.

> *Grants from the Consortium are not only infusions of funds but also educational tools*. The mere process of preparing a proposal is an opportunity for NIS women to learn […]. Receiving grants provides not only an opportunity to pay for an activity but also to learn the skills of grants managements and accountability.[429]

This idea of learning the skills of grants management is the most prominent one in the overall understanding of "capacity building" in Kiev. It further connects to ideas of "professionalism" and managerialism. "Professionalism" is defined in Kiev through business-like categories, such as clients, competitive products and services, and effective management. A good example of the professionalism discourse are the criteria for ethical work of NGOs during election campaigns that were presented at another panel of the ethics conference, "Ethical Aspects of CSO Activities during the Election Period": "honesty, transparency,

[428] Tisch, 23 August 2004, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[429] NIS-US Women's Consortium. "Strategic Plan (Internal Document)." November 7, 1995, emphasis added.

professionalism, quality of the product that is being delivered, a strong self-evaluation component, corporate responsibility." Many Ukrainians felt that the donor-NGO relationship should be more business-like. In the words of Iakov Rogalin from the Charitable Foundation *Dobrota* (Kindness) in Donetsk: "Let us face it – there are few resources and many people who want to get them. This means that there is competition, which is a healthy and important quality because there is no progress without the competition."[430]

Business-like professionalism is also the notion that is used to define quality and is given precedence over the actual content of the social issues it deals with:

> If we say that we do social entrepreneurship, it means that we approach it gradually and seriously. We train people, we prepare *business plans*, and we enhance the understanding that *in the first place this should be business*; that first and foremost it has to be a *competitive product and then all the other social stuff* […]. We have good trainings on strategic management given by an American professor of a business school. He says that approaches to managing NGO projects are just like those in business. Only the profit is different. But *professionalism* in reaching the goals is the same.[431]

Another example of how business-like professionalism is used to define the purpose and the goal of an NGO is the discourse applied by the Counterpart Creative Center Charity Foundation (CCC):

> The mission of Counterpart Creative Center Charity Foundation is to lead civil society organizations to the successful *results* of meeting the *clients'* needs, to high standards of work and high quality *services*, which will make these organizations a leading force of the civil society […]; we support the development of civil society through quick response to *clients'* needs.[432]

Under the heading of how to take advantage of CCC trainings one of the options reads: "you can order individual and corporate trainings"; the web site is also marked by an abundance of business-like marketing slogans: "We love the work we do. We help others grow."[433]

This reinvention of "capacity building" in terms of building up "professionalism" is connected to another significant transformation in meaning. In the next section I show how it enabled a locally driven contestation of the discursive center of "empowerment".

5.2.2. Empowerment: Which "mentality" is wrong after all?

The discursive center of "empowerment" is present in Kiev; however, there is also an opening in its meaning. In DC empowerment has everything to do with changing the way people think about themselves, their opportunities as well as their responsibilities. It is about helping

[430] UCAN. "Ukrainian National Conference".
[431] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[432] Counterpart Creative Center. *About Us* [cited 15 June 2005. Available from http://www.ccc.kiev.ua, emphasis added.
[433] Ibid.

people overcome what is believed to be the wrong Soviet mentality. This discursive center played a crucial role in several projects in Kiev. As the UCAN Program Director Larisa Tatarinova explained to me:

> Our project has an implicit goal to change the mentality and the culture. We want to help people switch from just demanding – you owe me something – to doing things yourself – you can [here a play on words with the title of the program UCAN[434]]. This can only be learnt by doing, it cannot be written down or explained and it is all a matter of time.[435]

Thus, in continuity with the interpretation emanating from Washington DC, "empowerment" means teaching people to be more pro-active in their everyday lives.

However, when narrowed down to the issues that concern civil society groups in Ukraine, the meaning of these discursive centers changes. The "wrong mentality" that has to be overcome is defined as a much more recent phenomenon than the Soviet legacies. A "new wrong mentality" is seen as the result of the early donor interventions that were conducted in an erratic and badly informed manner. Thus, empowerment is defined in terms of improving the assistance practices themselves in a joint effort between the Western and the Ukrainian partners.

> In the beginning, when they [the donors] just came, nobody knew what it would lead to – neither the NGOs that were literally mushrooming, nor the donors. Everything was done at random, without thinking; … it was all a mess. I've seen this receipt written in the early 1990s: "I have received 20,000 dollars to promote democracy in Ukraine. Signature." That's it. And all the money was coming in cash. It was an orgy![436]

Here a heavy portion of the blame is placed on the donors for the way in which they were distributing the resources. Inconsistency in NGO agendas is also blamed on donor programming. The director of the Ukrainian Women's Fund, Natalka Karbowska, referred to the early assistance practice to illustrate this fact:

> Women's organizations at the time were exclusively oriented towards donors' priorities. If one day a donor announced a grant competition on reproductive health, everyone was doing reproductive health. If the next day the competition was on economic empowerment of women, everyone would start doing economic empowerment projects. As a result, the quality suffered because NGOs were not focused. Now this is changing a lot. NGOs are

[434] This play on words, however, makes sense only in English and is in no way reflected in the Russian or Ukrainian name of the program. This is one of the many examples of English being the first language for NGO projects in Kiev.
[435] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author.
[436] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author.

> becoming more specialized and more focused, and thus the quality of their work increases.[437]

What is particularly important in the quote above is the emphasis on the "quality" of NGO work that is believed to be key to the empowerment of the NGO sector as a whole. It is also claimed that, due to a lack of clear direction as well as transparency and accountability, the assistance was encouraging tension, competitive behavior, and corrupt practices:

> Gradually *we* are managing to change things and what is very uplifting is that people are changing […]; what is most important is that there is no place anymore for all those "grantoïds" [grant-eaters] and "pocket NGOs". The donors are gradually withdrawing, so there is less assistance and it is much more focused and aimed at results […]; we have to change something inside ourselves. The assistance created many problems in its early years – fights for resources, competition; people did not know how to work together, they did not want to share information.[438]

What is very important here is that the agency for mentality change is attributed to Ukrainians working at and with NGOs and that this change is seen as occurring in spite of rather than thanks to the assistance. Again, the blame is placed on the wrong assistance practices and not on legacies from the Soviet or even earlier times.

This new meaning of the "wrong mentality" has implications for two other discursive centers – "professionalism" and "sustainability". For "professionalism" it means that this notion is turned around and applied to assistance practices themselves. This is a recent shift in meaning, and it has also to do with the fact that more administrative responsibility was shifted to Kiev in the late 1990s. In addition, an increasing number of Ukrainians are working to administer and implement assistance now as compared to the early and mid-1990s. The new meaning of "professionalism" suggests that learning is not just something expected from the assistance recipients but is also indispensable for administering and distributing assistance. For example, in my interviews at the USAID mission in Kiev two respondents emphasized that the mission's approach became "more focused" and that the communication between the different divisions of the mission as well as between different donors improved, so that there is now more oversight and coordination.[439]

The design of the recent USAID-funded civil society program UCAN also reflects some of these changes within assistance in Kiev:

> This was already much more professional also for the USAID and its staff […]. We have worked for several months on Monitoring and Evaluation […]; we had to develop all the indicators, the measurements, the control groups. We have never worked like that before [on a USAID project].[440]

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[437] Karbowska, 13 April 2005, interview by the author.
[438] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[439] Tymoshenko-Yakunina, 14 April 2005, Ivantcheva, 27 April 2005, interviews by author.
[440] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author.

At the panel on "Ethics of Relationships between Donors and CSOs" a discussion took place about whether or not it is ethical to accept funding from donors in certain situations. However, together with the "new wrong mentality" idea, a new way to look at this issue was raised. It is also unethical – it was argued - on the part of the donors to offer funds for certain purposes or in certain ways. Olena Suslova, who has had a long experience in assistance projects, stated this very explicitly:

> The donors have been very negative about the level of corruption in Ukraine, especially in the beginning. However, I always felt so furious about the way they operated themselves. They were working in cash and did not bother to ask for any serious proofs on how the money was spent. They were clearly tempting people. They were tempting people with a bribe, which is a crime in itself, you know![441]

These attitudes are emerging not only in Ukraine. A Georgian civic leader expressed a very similar concern in his recent article in an NGO newsletter: "Many international organizations also ignore Georgian law: they do not bother to register their offices properly or to register their staff in the government's taxpayer list. To avoid taxes, they use the personal accounts of their expatriate employees to pay salaries to their local employees."[442] These and other similar statements point to a discrepancy between donors' proclaimed professional norms and their modes of operation on the ground.

Such a critical attitude towards "assistance" is different from either suspicious and negative or uninformed but positive attitudes towards it that were typical of the early 1990s. I argue that it became possible due to the close interaction between Ukrainians and Americans in Kiev and to the standards of "professionalism" shared (even if with slightly different meanings) by both sides. In the next section I investigate whether these changes in meaning also led to the transformation of another important discursive center, "sustainability".

5.2.3. Sustainability: Who takes over

Although "sustainability" has always been an important discursive center in the discourse of assistance, in Kiev its use peaked recently, when many major donors and especially USAID faced the need to "phase out" soon. The discursive center of "sustainability" as the basis for a "phase out", which (as discussed in chapter four) was introduced in Washington DC, can also be found in Kiev. For many Ukrainians mediating the assistance it is important to become like their Western partners. They are eager to learn the skills of those partners because they believe that they could be doing their jobs just as well. Here the story of a Ukrainian organization,

[441] Suslova, 11 April 2005, interview by the author.
[442] David Usupashvili, "NGO Lessons from Georgia: Failed Expectations, New Cooperation," *Give & Take: A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia* 4, no. 4: Winter (2002): p.10.

CURE – the Center for Ukrainian Reform Education, is indicative of the workings of "sustainability" and its implications.

CURE is registered as an international charitable organization that is active not only in Ukraine but also in other countries of the former Soviet Union. Its goals are "to provide information support to economic, political, and social reforms in Ukraine and to increase Ukrainian citizen involvement in the process of reforms that promote the development of civil society and a market oriented democracy."[443] It was created on the basis of the Ukrainian Market Reform Education Program (UMREP), one of the bigger USAID projects in Ukraine since 1993 (Ukrainian Reform Education Program/UREP since 2002). The U(M)REP was dedicated to conducting public information and education campaigns on the national and local level. It was particularly well known for its TV and radio programs concerning privatization and other market reforms; its overall purpose was to popularize the reforms among the Ukrainian population. The U(M)REP was established as a joint project of the governments of Ukraine and the United States through USAID and was no different in its structure and mode of operation from other USAID projects. As usual, it was implemented by subcontracting organizations, such as PricewaterhouseCoopers or Gavin Anderson (at different times and together with other subcontractors). The fact that this project is now implemented by CURE signifies more than just a change of abbreviation, for CURE is one of the first subcontractors organized and run by Ukrainians. One of its long-standing coordinators, Victoria Marchenko, now with USAID Media and Civil Society Programs, recalls:

> In the beginning there were many foreign experts working on the project because we had no proper expertise. Then, gradually, we were pushing out the foreigners because we became more *professional*. I have an MBA in marketing communications myself, you know. So we started with 12 foreign experts in 1993 and we ended with none.[444]

Now the Center is one of the few Ukrainian organizations that receive direct funds from such donors as USAID, the Charles Steward Mott Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the International Renaissance Foundation, because its financial management and audit procedures meet donors' requirements. CURE is a "success story" that reflects the ideas and aspirations of many Ukrainian assistance professionals in Kiev, while at the same time it serves as an embodiment of the discursive center of "sustainability/phase out". This is significant because the donor-driven understanding of "sustainability" has converged with locally shared notions of success, and has materialized in particular organizational forms that are "sustained" exclusively by Ukrainians.

Another example of assistance tasks being delegated to a new Ukrainian organization is the Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF). The UWF was founded when the Network Women's

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[443] CURE. *Home Page*, March 19, 2003 [cited 20 July 2005. Available from http://www.cure.org.ua/eng.
[444] Marchenko, 27 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.

Program[445] run by the Soros Foundation[446] in Ukraine was phasing out and had as its primary goal to take over that Program's tasks. This development was part of the general "phase-out" strategy that the Soros Foundations are currently implementing in most of the former Soviet countries. With start-up funding from the Global Fund for Women (USA), the UWF was founded in 2000 and is mostly engaged in fund-raising and grant giving. It provides grants to women's NGO projects that vary considerably in their goals and financial needs – from a 94,162 USD project to buy a mammography scanner to the (typical) series of trainings of up to 2,000 USD and trips abroad to attend conferences on topics related to NGO activities.

An important addition to the structure of grants is a special category of grants for newly formed and start-up NGOs. Since 2001 the UWF even provides funding for women's organizations to register as NGOs. There is also additional funding for UWF grantees that would like to become hubs of information for their respective region and to reach out to NGOs from smaller cities and villages. In this way the UWF aims to spread the NGO network throughout the country and, thus, in a way revives the "capacity building" approach of "letting a thousand flowers bloom" from the early 1990s, which I discussed in chapter four. This time, however, the "thousand flowers" approach is much more about building up an effective network than just encouraging NGO growth. The UWF director Natalia Karbowska explained to me: "When we receive grant applications, we do not always know where they come from, nor do we have an opportunity to travel every time to meet this NGO." Bigger NGOs that act as information centers are envisioned as "contact persons" for the UWF in different regions of the country. Women's NGOs seem to be picking up on this initiative: Out of 22 projects supported in the spring of 2005 about one third are aimed at working with smaller and newly registered organizations.[447]

The UWF is another Ukrainian NGO whose rationale and operations fit organizational requirements of assistance. In other words, this is a Ukrainian initiative that received its impetus from both Ukrainian and American concerns to preserve assistance projects to women. It uses its relative independence to draw more on Ukrainian experiences with assistance and the lessons learnt but it maintains the overall discursive and organizational structure of assistance as shaped from abroad.

Another important example is the "Empowering Education" program. "Empowering education is a pedagogy of empowerment that prepares boys and girls for their roles of mutual support, civic activism, and state building on the basis of partnership models."[448] Its methodology relates to other approaches in pedagogy, such as Feminist Pedagogy, Civic

[445] At the Soros Foundation/ Open Society Institute "Network Programs" are thematic programs that are administered either from the headquarters in New York or from the country branch that has established a particular program; other countries' branches join in the program depending on their priorities and available funding.
[446] The branch of the Soros Foundation in Ukraine is called *Fond Vidrodzhennia* (the Renaissance Foundation).
[447] Karbowska, 13 April 2005, interview by author.
[448] Women's Information Consultative Center. *Empowering Education: About Us* [cited 7 June 2005. Available from http://empedu.civicua.org/ukrainian/1-pronas/page1.htm.

Education, Critical thinking, and Debate.[449] It is thus a mixture of approaches that were introduced as part of alternative methodologies and trainings for assistance, especially by the Soros Foundation. Its founder explains the impetus for developing such a program in the following way:

> When I first visited a training [on women's leadership organized by Winrock International] in 1995, I liked it a lot. However, lots of other Ukrainian women did not like it at all. They were saying: "again those Americans are pushing something on us!" or "this is not our thing, all this sitting in a circle and discussing stuff, it contradicts our mentality."[450] I was trying to understand why we have such different impressions. […] We started our program ["empowering education"] in order to show that this can be something for us. […] This was both, thanks to and despite of American influence. We wanted to find those best things we could borrow for ourselves.[451]

In 1997, the all-Ukrainian Association of Empowering Education and Communication was registered. In 1999 it became one of the Soros Foundation Network programs. Through the Soros network it has spread into the following countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The program has also conducted trainings for trainers in Afghanistan, Burma, and Indonesia. Currently, the theme and the methodology of "Empowering Education" are widely known both to NGOs and to donors. For the Soros Foundation it has become the only network program that originated in a former Soviet country. Different women's NGOs apply for grants to implement "empowering education" in the same way they used to apply for donor-initiated programs. In 2004 the Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF) supported six NGO projects aimed at "conducting trainings on empowering education" or "implementing empowering education programs", and even at "creating networks between NGOs working on empowering education."[452] Whereas in the examples of CURE and the UWF Ukrainians took over an assistance project, what is significant about this program is that Ukrainian women themselves created a project that is now being exported as part of assistance elsewhere around the world.

The donor-driven understanding of achieving "sustainability" through establishing assistance-like organizations also found its application in the concept and practice of creating and supporting Resource Centers throughout the country. The Eurasia Foundation is implementing the biggest resource center's initiative funded by the USAID. According to the criteria of the Eurasia Foundation, Resource Centers grew from the NGOs that by 1996 had already demonstrated a track record in working on donor projects, had experience in training

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449 Women's Information Consultative Center. *Upovnovazhuval'na Osvita: Posibnyk Dlia Treneriv [Empowering Education: Trainer's Manual]*. Kyiv: Women's Information Consultative Center, 2002, p.12-13.

450 The word "mentality" was particularly popular in the 1990s, it was widely evoked in the discussions relating *sovok* to a rapidly changing present or different projected futures. It is another example of a new post-Soviet language.

451 Suslova, 11 April 2005, interview by the author.

452 UWF. *Projects Supported by UWF in 2004* UWF, 2004 [cited 20 June 2005. Available from http://www.uwf.kiev.ua/.

NGO leaders on a broad range of issues concerning organizational management, and had their own libraries with specialized literature. They were meant to represent or even replace donors on the ground in that they would be conducting most of the work connected with administering grants, such as "professional support to NGOs including information provision, assistance in program design and their expertise, modeling development strategies for NGOs in the region, their effective management, consultations on writing projects, and choosing the potential donors to receive grants."[453] In addition, the resource centers could take over some of the technical and legal responsibilities for projects proposed by groups that are not yet registered as NGOs and, thus, help them become NGOs in the future. Although this project was also meant to help donors reach the smaller NGOs in the region, what it did is to strengthen a few better-established NGOs and turn them into local replicas of their foreign donors' organizational set-up.

Another element of the idea of "sustainability" that is shared among both Ukrainians and Americans in Kiev concerns financial independence from the donor. Whereas in the early 1990s assistance administrators were reporting on activities they supported financially, now it is considered a sign of improved "sustainability" to report on activities that were not supported and could take place anyway. Instead of saying "we paid for this and this and that", nowadays the assistance implementers say "we *only* paid for brochures, or for rent; the rest NGOs did themselves."

Active involvement of Ukrainian professionals in running assistance programs in Kiev played an important role in transforming the meaning of "sustainability". This discursive center became more specific and its new meaning reflects the tensions between the foreigners and the Ukrainians and their conflicting visions for the future. These tensions are also evident from the negotiations of meaning of the other two discursive centers: "capacity building" and "empowerment". In the following section I focus on the specific realm of gender and women's issues and show how the dialogue between the foreigners and the Ukrainians transformed the meaning of such discursive centers as "women as a target group", "women's empowerment", and "gender".

5.3. Gender and Women's Issues: How Are They Mediated?

As I have highlighted above, Kiev is a site in which the direct dialogue between "Westerners" and "Ukrainians" is most intense. In the early to mid-1990s most of the "Western" women who came to establish contacts with local women's groups stayed in Kiev; and up to the present day most foreigners are based in the capital, although their visits to other cities have increased substantially. Many Ukrainian women I interviewed in Kiev complained about the initial lack of understanding between the two sides. Overall, the feeling was that the foreigners who came knew little about the situations and the concerns of Ukrainian women and yet acted

[453] League of Resource Centers. *History of the League*, December 4, 2003 [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua/.

in a fairly authoritarian and self-confident way. Ukrainians, who lacked any previous contacts with foreigners, mostly did not know English and felt particularly self-conscious in front of the guests from the "civilized" world, were not very outspoken and, thus, did not help bridge the gap in communication. Olena Suslova, one of the veterans of the Ukrainian women's movement, recalls:

> There was a group of women from the United States [back in 1992-93] and we were to meet them in the library. Very few of us knew English, and so there were boys and girls interpreting, which was difficult because they were trained in Soviet universities and also *did not know many of those terms*. We were invited to discuss women's issues but *we were quite shy* in the beginning. So those American women started explaining to us what they do back at home. They said they were working on changing the welfare system because, for example, at the time medical insurances were not covering important services like dentists, which is too expensive for many women and so on. I was looking at myself and at other women – we could not buy food at the time, our whole political, social, and economic life went completely upside down. And so we were listening to those ladies *as if they flew in from Mars*.[454]

This recollection points to important features of the early dialogue between American and Ukrainian women-activists. Americans assumed that women-activists are the same everywhere and are preoccupied with similar issues or at least can relate easily to other women's concerns. They were not conscious of the lack of similar terminology and of the inappropriateness of certain formats for interaction. The fact that both were not familiar to local women inhibited their ability to contribute to those exchanges freely and on equal footing. Such interactions on women's issues had the same features as other civil society interactions I have addressed in the previous section. In this section I show how these interactions re-enact core discursive centers that define women's issues.

5.3.1. Women as a target group: "At risk" of what?

I begin by exploring further the (re)interpretation of the discursive center of "women as a target group" by looking in more detail at the USAID Anti-Trafficking Initiative in Ukraine. This Initiative consists of three key components: prevention, protection, and prosecution. These include such measures as "public education and outreach", implemented through USAID media programs as in the Community Response to Trafficking and Domestic Violence Program (DOS), and work with enforcement and prosecution personnel as implemented through the International Organization for Migration (IOM); there are also projects directly connected to women affected implemented by Winrock International, namely the Trafficking Prevention Program (TPP) and the Women's Economic Empowerment program (WEE). These two programs are seen as mutually reinforcing components that address the issue of trafficking.

[454] Suslova, 11 April 2004, interview by the author, emphasis added.

While the initial push to develop a program on trafficking came from Washington DC, the initiative and its components were mostly designed in Kiev as a result of collaboration between several external American experts, the USAID Mission in Kiev, and Winrock International. The issue was new and relatively unexplored, and those who designed the initiative had a mandate to develop a new model and use new tools.

The Trafficking Prevention Program (TPP) started in 1998 as a pilot project and continued with additional funding till 2004; it established seven Trafficking Prevention Centers, called "Women for Women Centres" (WfW), in the country on the basis of existing women's NGOs that were members of the NIS-US Women's Consortium. The selection criteria for those NGOs were "demonstrated experience in cooperating with other NGOs, health providers, and the legal community, as well as with the local government."[455] These centers were conducting three types of activities: the job skills program, the crisis prevention program, and provision of legal services. A year later, in February 1999, the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) program started and continued till July 2004. It established six Women's Business Support Centers that offer business training to women and cooperate with affiliated credit unions to support their students in starting up their own businesses. Both TPP and WEE were conceived as "preventive" programs aimed at working with "women as a target group", namely their aim was to identify and work with "women at risk" of being trafficked rather than with actual cases or victims of trafficking. As I will show later on in a discussion of the discursive center of "women as a target group", their connection to trafficking remained very loose, and the notion of "women at risk" was reinterpreted to a considerable extent.

The third component – "prosecution" – was addressed through another project, Community Response to Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Humans (DOS), which continued from 1999 to 2002. This project was funded by the US Department of State Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and was aimed at conducting research into domestic violence and trafficking, working with NGOs and community leaders, conducting public awareness campaigns, and cooperating with government officials, law enforcement, court systems, and medical institutions. Therefore, its main goals and objectives were not only defined on the basis of "women as a target group" but included other target groups as well.

This component is now part of the new project funded by the USAID and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). One of its core goals is:

> Increasing awareness by ensuring that governmental and community leaders, service providers and the general public are well informed about the problem of trafficking in persons, and that *at-risk groups* are knowledgeable about how to protect themselves and *are motivated* to do so.[456]

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455 Winrock International. "Trafficking Prevention in Ukraine: A Pilot Program." Winrock International, July 1998.

456 USAID/Kiev. *USAID Is Launching "Countering Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine" Project* [cited 28 April 2005. Available from http://www.usaid.kiev.ua.

The discursive center of "women as a target group" is at the core of all these programs; however, its meaning is not the same in each of them.

The "preventive" nature of TPP and WEE does not mean that they work to stop those who perpetrate trafficking but that they prevent those women judged likely to fall victim to trafficking from finding themselves in that predicament. One may argue that this is not the most logical interpretation of the idea of "prevention" and choose to advocate other methods of combating trafficking. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I do not go into that debate; instead, I analyze the effects this idea of "prevention" has had on the core discursive center of "women as a target group". Namely, it implies that there are reasons that expose women to the dangers of trafficking and there are things that can be done to affect their risk of such exposure. In other words, the question is who are those women that have to be "prevented" from being trafficked and why are *they* "at risk" of being trafficked.

A broad definition of "women as a target group" in both TPP and WEE implies that potentially all women are "at risk" of being trafficked; their susceptibility is explained by their psychological and physical weakness as well as by ignorance, lack of experience, and an overall disadvantaged position in society. The discursive center of "women as a target group" that developed in Washington is reiterated – women are generally disadvantaged because they are women and compose a marginalized group. For example, the need for an economic empowerment program for women in Ukraine is described as follows:

> Ukraine's transition from a centralized to a market economy has brought progress as well as problems. *Women have been left out of the process or alienated* by the closing of state enterprises, with women constituting seventy percent of the newly unemployed. Grossly under-represented in public institution leadership, they are *less likely than men* to be elected to decision-making positions.[457]

Here the general idea is that women as a whole experience transition differently from men and are generally more likely than men to lose out. Thus, they need to benefit from women-specific interventions. This means that women are already, by virtue of being women, at greater risk of falling victim to both domestic and external threats.

In terms of domestic conditions, a connection is made to two issues: domestic violence and the lack of women-entrepreneurs. In both cases, it is argued that women are treated unfairly because they do not believe in their own powers and have internalized the status of being oppressed. This meaning of "women as a target group" is developed through the idea of crisis prevention implemented by WfW Centers. Crisis prevention trainings, walk-in services, and telephone hotlines focus on the following themes: women's leadership, women's human rights, prevention and dealing with instances of trafficking. An important element of the program is to support groups that consist of women dealing with similar situations and are led by a professional psychologist. Interactive trainings that take place

[457] Winrock International. "Project Fact Sheet: Women's Economic Empowerment: Ukraine." Kiev: Winrock International, 1999, emphasis added.

within TPP are said to be aimed at "increasing self-confidence of women, and helping women develop basic practical life skills."[458]

Another component of the TPP program addresses the issue of domestic violence. What is interesting here is that, despite a seeming coherence of the TPP program, there is hardly any evidence that establishes a direct connection between domestic violence and trafficking in women. Moreover, the vagueness of this connection is recognized by program implementers themselves.[459] One of the respondents suggested that this connection was first introduced in a study of trafficking and domestic violence conducted by the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (commissioned by the US Department of State and completed in 2000). Although this connection remains unclear for people who deal with the issue of trafficking, TPP made its contribution in naturalizing it. The TPP program speculates that victims of trafficking often come from dysfunctional families or have suffered from abusive husbands, in other words, that the target group originates in an oppressive context. These experiences are said to have aggravated psychological problems of those women, in particular the so-called victim syndrome. What is important here are the discursive shifts from defining women in their entirety as "at risk" to searching for specific pathologies that increase women's susceptibility to trafficking. In other words, there is a tension between the fact that women are defined as one uniform target group and the specificity of the issue.

For TPP, women are "at risk" because they are "in crisis". The TPP crisis prevention component suggests the following symptoms of women in crisis: lack of self-confidence, feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, and negative attitudes towards life, thus adding a highly psychologized and medicalized quality to the target group. This reiterates the idea of inadequacy and lack of agency on the part of women and constructs the target group as the locus of abnormality. The Crisis Prevention Program is repeatedly reported to have been capable of fighting these feelings in women through a series of trainings, consultations, and sessions in self-help groups.

The idea that women lack self-confidence, and that these psychological problems prevent them from seizing the opportunities there are for them, is strong in the Anti-Trafficking Initiative as a whole. For example, the target group of Women Business Support Centers (WBSC) funded through Winrock International as part of the WEE program is defined as "women who, while motivated, lack funds, self-confidence, training, and experience." It is argued that women are constrained by their "preconceptions about the difficulty and even impossibility of starting a business." As a result, one of the important components of WBSC's activities is seen to be "the interactive training method and atmosphere, where participants develop relationships that last beyond the course."[460] One of the core trainings delivered by WEE on "how to start your own business" reads: "The aim of

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458 Winrock International. "Project Fact Sheet: Trafficking Prevention Program: Ukraine." Kiev: Winrock International, 1998.

459 Tymoshenko-Yakunina, February 18, 2003, April 14, 2005; Samolevska, February 4, 2003, interviews by author.

460 Winrock International. "Women's Economic Empowerment, Final Report." Winrock International, July 31, 2004, p.5.

the training is to increase *inner women's potential* to resolve vital problems, to raise the *motivation* of self-occupation, to provide *basic* knowledge on entrepreneurship, and to *acquaint women with realities* of running their own business in contemporary Ukraine."[461] Here the emphasis is put on psychological intervention, helping to adapt and building self-confidence. At the same time, the practical knowledge that is to be provided through training is only "basic", as if such a level is more than enough for women to get started. In addition, the need to introduce women to the realities of running a business implies that they do not have an idea (or have the wrong one) about how things "really" work in their own country.

This meaning of "women as a target group" that is "at risk" because of their ignorance and lack of experience is most prominent in discussions that are directly related to the issue of trafficking. This is, first and foremost, visible in the awareness-raising component of the project. The image that comes across in most of the trafficking stories and, most vividly, in the USAID-funded three-part fictional docudrama "If I Do Not Return" features naïve inexperienced girls who are deceitfully lured into trafficking by criminals in disguise. These young women are shown as not taking the responsibility for their lives, as captured by dreams of easy and flamboyant futures. Their experiences are ultimately the experiences of having been turned into a commodity within a highly criminalized context.

Ideas of the incompetence and inadequacy of women are prominent in the stories that report the actual instances of trafficking. For example, Julia, 24 years old and single, is said to have "… dreamed her life would turn into a fairy tale – that a prince in shining armor would whisk her off her feet and take her away from all her problems." Her story continues with the experience of being trafficked through an Internet marriage arrangement. "Dreaming about the shiny world out there" is a persistent metaphor in descriptions of instances of trafficking. These representations overemphasize the irrational and emotional side of women who end up as victims of trafficking. Too often do these women come out as incapable of thinking for themselves. Another victim of trafficking presented in "Women's Stories" is said to have been put on the ferry and told that "the ship would take her to the United States, where she would be met. Of course, the boat was not bound for the U.S. but for Turkey. L. found it out too late – she was already en route when she learned of the ferry's destination."[462] Not calling into doubt the instance of trafficking itself, it is still difficult to comprehend how a twenty-four year old woman in her own country could get on a ferry without knowing its destination, not to mention the fact that there cannot be any direct ferries from Ukrainian shores to the U.S. for the mere reason of geographical distance. Interestingly, the study conducted by Winrock International itself reveals some puzzling figures that contradict the constructions discussed above. According to this study, up to 12% of Ukrainian victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation admitted knowing they would be in the sex industry prior to their departure.[463]

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461 Winrock International. *Short-Term Business Training* Winrock International, 2000 [cited 23 March 2004. Available from www.winrock.org.ua/WEE.

462 Winrock International. "Women's Stories." Kiev: Winrock International/ TPP, 2002.

463 Winrock International. "Statistical Analysis of Surveys of Human Trafficking Victims Who Sought Assistance at the Seven Regional Women for Women Centers of the Trafficking Prevention Project." Kiev: Winrock International, 2004.

TPP program constructs "women as a target group" as ignorant and, thus, being particularly "at risk" should they cross their country's borders. A recent assessment conducted by Development Alternatives Inc recommends targeting anti-trafficking more effectively and identifing "at-risk" groups in a more informed way. It contests the current understanding behind identifying the target groups that defines those "at risk" as those who are highly interested in going overseas for work or marriage and those willing to break rules or take risks to do so.[464] More has to be done to improve our knowledge about factors that create the difference between successful migration and instances of trafficking. The assessment emphasizes that those people willing to take risks or break rules may be more likely to migrate but they are not necessarily more likely to be trafficked. In addition, it points to the fact that an unspecified treatment of "women as a target group" leads to overlooking particular categories of cases.

> One *particularly at risk group* that does not seem to be the focus of many prevention programs includes women who are already involved in prostitution in their countries of origin. […] In addition, many such women may already be victims of internal trafficking. Yet, in many countries of the region, few programs are targeting the prevention of internal trafficking into the sex industry.[465]

Further, methods and tools of anti-trafficking programs have to be tailored to particular forms of trafficking, as, for example, children of certain ethnic minorities are at higher risk of being trafficked for begging. This "target group" clearly needs a different type of assistance than highly educated but currently unemployed Ukrainian women. Thus, the assessment further expresses concern about a remarkable silence over victims of trafficking for other than sexual exploitation, especially concerning the trafficking of men and exploitation of male migrants. "In fact, possibly as a result of the style and content of trafficking awareness campaigns, there is widespread belief that trafficking in persons is synonymous with trafficking for prostitution."[466]

The increasing awareness of these inconsistencies and problems in defining "women as a target group" in the context of the issue of trafficking has led to important shifts in the meaning of this discursive center. The most recent Anti-Trafficking Project incorporated many important changes that respond to criticisms and reinterpretations discussed above. USAID started to fund a new initiative "Countering Trafficking in Persons" (TIP) in Ukraine over the period July 2004 – June 2006. This project is implemented by the International

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[464] As was previously argued, for example, by Jane Ruud in "Report on Trafficking Prevention Efforts in Ukraine: Impact of the Women for Women Centers on at-Risk Teen and Adult Women." Winrock International, USAID: Regional Mission to Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, 2001 and in "Summary Report of Trafficking of Women in Ukraine." Winrock International, USAID: Regional Mission to Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, 2002.

[465] Rosenberg, Ruth, Sebastian Lazaroiu, and Elena Tyuryukanova. "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings in Europe and Eurasia." Development Alternatives, Inc, September 2004, p.43, emphasis added.

[466] Rosenberg, Lazaroiu, and Tyuryukanova. "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings", p.45.

Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Ukraine. Technically, the project differs from those implemented by Winrock in important ways. It builds upon the existing partner network of NGOs in 25 different oblasts of Ukraine, including seven "Women for Women" Centers. Its main tool is funding NGO projects through micro-grants. Such direct support constitutes 92% of the operational budget. Overall, IOM can support up to 40 such NGO projects. This means that NGOs can apply with their own projects for funding on a rolling basis. In practical terms, this means that, rather than being a coherent program with centrally developed components as used to be the case with TPP, TIP is more of an umbrella structure to a varied set of NGOs that propose to address one or several of the TIP priorities. These priorities are: 1) increasing awareness about the issue of trafficking; 2) assisting victims and insuring their rehabilitation; and 3) strengthening coordination of national and regional counter-trafficking programs.[467]

At the moment (2006) there is only one program funded within the USAID Anti-Trafficking Initiative. The USAID budget for this initiative for 2004-2006 is roughly half of what was allocated in previous years. The TIP program is as much the result of this lack of funds as it is of the changing approach that USAID/Ukraine developed towards the problem of trafficking. The agency chose a project that allows it to substantially cut administration costs, while at the same time providing a framework for more focused initiatives and covering all the regions of Ukraine. The NGO members that form this network obtain the funding to maintain and expand their own activities rather than to start a new project. This is evident from the variety of approaches and tools that are reported by participating NGOs. For example, the former "Women for Women" Center in Donetsk continues to work according to the methodology developed for the TPP project. Another NGO, "Salus" Charity Foundation based in Lviv (in the west of Ukraine), has been providing medical, diagnostic, and information services to victims of rape and violence since 1996. The Foundation keeps this more specialized medical focus also in the framework of TIP. It provides consultations before and after HIV testing, ultra-sound gynecological examinations, venerological consultations and monitoring of medical treatment and other related medical services.[468] Such a focus would not have been funded within the framework of previous USAID Anti-Trafficking Initiatives, and yet it is one of the services much needed in the context of victim rehabilitation.

In response to the criticism[469] that all the previous components of the Anti-Trafficking Initiative had no focus on providing practical assistance to the actual victims of trafficking, TIP explicitly aims at "assisting victims and ensuring their dignified reintegration."

> Reintegration assistance helps trafficking victims rebuild their lives. Rehabilitation support not only helps victims of trafficking, but also the families who *lose mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers to trafficking*. These victims are

[467] USAID/Kiev. "Countering Trafficking in Persons: Executive Summary (Internal Document)." Kiev: USAID, 2004.
[468] IOM/Ukraine. *Ukrainian NGO Counter-Trafficking Newsletter # 3*. Kiev, May 2004.
[469] Voiced for example in Rosenberg, Lazaroiu, and Tyuryukanova. "Best Practices for Programming to Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings".

> able to return to their families and become healthy and productive members of their communities.[470]

Not only does this program introduce a new component of reintegration, it also redefines and broadens its "target group" in significant ways. It defines women in a broader context of their social relations. A more open and less prescriptive discursive structure of this new program also enables alternative ideas of "target groups". One such proposition that would not have fit any of the previous USAID trafficking programs came from the Coordinator of USAID trafficking programs, Tetyana Tymoshenko: "We also have to pay attention to the *demand side* of the trafficking problem. It is important to understand who those clients are and how we could target them. This is a very interesting issue, which is completely under-researched."[471]

TIP is also less exclusively oriented towards issues of slavery in the sex industry and includes other forms of exploitation into its area of concern. The example below illustrates this shift. A victim of trafficking from Donetsk, a big industrial city in the east of Ukraine, is said to have had a degree in economics and yet to have been unable to find a full-time job. She opted for taking up a seasonal construction job in Russia, which she arranged through a representative, paying a fifty-dollar fee. However, in Russia her passport was confiscated and she was forced to work seven days a week on construction sites. This example cited on the home page of the USAID Mission in Kiev is important for its apparent lack of resemblance to more "juicy" and sensational stories I quoted above. The victim is neither too young nor from a small rural place. The work abroad she chooses does not seem lucrative in any way; moreover, the "abroad" itself is practically next door. Her choice of destination is not clouded by romanticized images of the distant Promised Land. Coming from a mostly Russian-speaking city, she is unlikely to face any linguistic or cultural hurdles. She ends up doing the job she planned but without any pay or opportunity to complain, rather than getting into the plot of a crime novel. Unfortunately, this is something that could have also happened within her own country.

The IOM is increasingly focusing on different forms of exploitation; for example, it organized a workshop titled *Development of Counter-Trafficking Mechanisms in Ukraine; Non-Sexual Forms of Exploitation* in Kiev on 16th February 2006. In the following section, I discuss the implications of such (re)enactments of "women as a target group" for the issue of "women's empowerment".

5.3.2. Women's empowerment: Gender or "ladies' trifles"?

Surprisingly, Kiev is the only site of interaction in which the discursive center of "gender" is employed in significant ways. The term "gender" is widely used among Ukrainians in Kiev (by now also in other bigger cities like Kharkov or Dnepropetrovsk) despite - and in fact thanks

[470] USAID/Kiev. *USAID Is Launching "Countering Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine".*
[471] Tymoshenko-Yakunina, 14th April 2005, interview by author.

to - its clearly foreign origin. Larisa Tatarinova, UCAN Program Director, explained this dynamic in the following way:

> When gender equality projects started, *they were brought in from the outside*; there was no need for them. But those were *world-recognized* approaches and so they were important to know. Now that many people have been trained, we can start thinking whether we need it at all. Maybe Ukraine does not need this but *it is good that people know this terminology well* and understand different approaches.[472]

What is very important in this quote is the alignment of the discursive center of "gender" with that of "international/ world community": These concepts are important because knowing them allows one to qualify for participation in the "world/ international community". In fact, it is in this context that "gender" has gained more prominence in Kiev than it did in Washington, even though its origins are clearly with the latter. And yet, the meaning of "gender" in Kiev is not the same as that employed by most assistance professionals or trainers in/from Washington DC. Larisa Tatarinova explained further: "Gender does not mean fighting for women's rights, whereas 99% of people, including those who do gender trainings, think this is one and the same thing. This is absolutely incorrect! […] For us, gender is about a proper balance between sexes, about their synergy."[473] She explained to me why her project does not address either women's issues or gender education:

> Our project [UCAN] is *oriented towards local needs* […]. We conducted many polls and roundtables and we understood that this topic is of no priority to our NGOs. Moreover, they already know a lot about it. There have been so many trainings on this topic; every second NGO leader has been trained. So we have decided not to do it.[474]

In other words, "gender" is utilized by Ukrainian women who mediate assistance to justify their lack of interest in women-specific programs. They point to the convergence between "gender" and "women's issues" that is typical of most assistance policies in order to show how the "proper" meaning of "gender" is being misunderstood in assistance.

Another Ukrainian respondent, who asked not to be quoted by name, restated this idea in a much more critical tone:

> As far as technical assistance is concerned, I think that all the money spent on gender trainings and all these other *ladies' trifles* is money wasted. People have simply learnt how to say not a "chair*man*" but a "chair*woman*" […] people have received salaries, there is no harm in it, of course, but these ideas will not live on.

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[472] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[473] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by author.
[474] Tatarinova, 28 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.

"Ladies' trifles" (*zhenskie shtuchki*) is a somewhat derogatory term that simultaneously refers to little tricks and ladies' bijoux and has a diminutive connotation. The phrase is colloquial and is commonly used in private contexts. In the context of women's programs, its original meaning as well as its misplaced usage point to the uselessness and empty nature of those programs.

The fact that the NGO sector is highly feminized is stressed to further ridicule the notion of the oppression and discrimination of women. The notions of "professionalism" and the emphasis on delivering a competitive product or service that I have discussed above contradict the idea of civil society as a "safe haven" for marginalized groups that is popular in Washington DC. Instead, Ukrainian women emphasize that in NGO work it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman as long as you are professional enough.

5.4. Conclusion

5.4.1. What it means to mediate assistance

In Kiev the actual content and method of the assistance discourse is (re)interpreted through the interaction between Americans and Ukrainians. This interaction is facilitated through a new discursive center, that of a "world/international community". Even though this center has an external origin, it connects to the local Ukrainian aspirations, especially among the professional elites in Kiev, to bridge the gap between Ukraine and the rest of the "civilized world". However, the notion of "community" is somewhat misleading here, since in the context of "assistance" this space is not shared between its members in the same way. Rather than having equal status within the community, Americans and Ukrainians are related hierarchically as teachers and students, and this division is maintained through the boundaries of expertise. Moreover, the goal of teaching is not to develop the capacity of the recipients of aid per se but to enable them to work efficiently on the tasks defined by "assistance".

As I have discussed in chapters one and two, some researchers have rightly argued that the new assistance elite has a stake in sustaining assistance rather than alleviating the problems for which it is given.[475] And yet, my own findings show that becoming part of the assistance machinery has also granted agency to that elite. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not this agency is going to make local knowledge matter more in the assistance discourse. In other words, giving the locals more voice does not directly translate into more locally relevant assistance programs. If this local agency is driven by the survival concerns that are shared between Ukrainian and American assistance professionals, it may help solidify the existing assistance discourse and practice rather than substantially transform it. On the other hand, if

[475] For the general argument see, for example, Cooley and Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action." Specifically in the post-socialist context, Mandel, "Seeding Civil Society."

new meanings of mediating "assistance" gain more prominence, assistance discourse and practice in Kiev may indeed change.

5.4.2. What it means to mediate between civil society and assistance

In Kiev the dynamic of "capacity building" is largely shaped by the interaction between different mediators of assistance, both American and Ukrainian. Acting together in the shared space provided by the discursive center of the "world/international community", both sides work to mediate the ideas of "assistance" that come from Washington and the Ukrainian ideas of what "assistance" can do. As I indicated earlier, this is not an interaction of equals, although the two sides need each other for "assistance" to take place. Americans are the ones who know how assistance works and see their task in teaching this to their Ukrainian counterparts. "Capacity building" means that Ukrainians are taught how to apply for assistance, manage grants, do reporting, and so on. The Ukrainians who have gone through this training are supposed to become trainers themselves and to disseminate this knowledge further, to smaller NGOs and outside of the capital. In this way, "capacity building" has the meaning of socializing Ukrainian counterparts into the "assistance" world. The important components of "capacity building" on this level are "seed grants" and "trainings"; the former is the practical embodiment of the "thousand flowers" idea and the latter is the socialization tool.

The success of socialization (as defined by the assistance discourse) is particularly visible in the example of the "Empowering Education" program, which was developed by Ukrainians according to the "assistance" rules and now travels back along the assistance chain and is incorporated into the "assistance/aid" package that is offered to other countries or "regions". Other examples of successful socialization would be the increase in Ukrainian staff within various grant-giving agencies and the appearance of fully Ukrainian organizations that have become eligible for implementing and administering "assistance" projects that were previously given only to their American counterparts.

The assumption of socialization into a shared space gives an interesting tilt to the notion of "empowerment". For Ukrainians mediating the assistance the issue of the "wrong mentality" inherited from the Soviet period is believed to have been overcome early on through the "capacity building" efforts. These Ukrainians are positioned as the "enlightened" group, the ones whose task is to spread the word further. Ukrainians are considering themselves as just as "professional" as their American counterparts, and just as suited to doing the assistance job. From this perspective, instances of corruption and misallocation of resources are understood by Ukrainians in a new way. Rather than blaming them on the Soviet legacy, they attribute these problems to the failures of assistance itself. An opening embodied in the notion of the "new wrong mentality" has emerged that recognizes the problem of mentality but attributes it to the malfunctioning of assistance itself. Due to the understanding of assistance as a "community" of which the new Ukrainian assistance professionals see themselves as part, "empowerment" is defined in terms of improving the assistance itself.

Thus, even though the assistance discourse itself is not questioned, some room is created for its change from within by Ukrainians.

Along the same lines, the notion of "sustainability" acquires an additional meaning. Although the idea of leaving behind a set of organizations that would be capable of managing assistance on their own is not questioned directly, a debate is opened on what organizational forms and activities can realistically live on beyond the assistance cycle. This debate opens up the meaning of assistance and introduces questions as to whether assistance is conducive to "sustainability" at all.

5.4.3. What it means to empower women

In Kiev the meaning of the discursive center of "women as a target group" has undergone substantial transformation over the cause of the last decade. This is particularly visible in the changes incorporated into the most recent Anti-Trafficking Initiative – the Countering Trafficking in Persons program implemented by IOM. The notion of "women as a target group" is redefined both to make it more specific and to include other potential target groups, such as family members, male migrants, or trafficked children. Particularly visible are the attempts to redefine the issue of trafficking so as to include various other forms of exploitation rather than just slavery in the sex industry.

The idea of providing women with a women-specific space and programs that is developed in Washington DC is often treated with skepticism, if not with overt hostility, in Kiev. Pejorative terms such as "*zhenskie shtuchki"* (ladies' trifles or tricks) are used to point to what Ukrainians believe to be a simplistic view of women's empowerment. Moreover, in Kiev the notions of "women as victims" and "women's empowerment" are perceived as largely incompatible. In other words, women are believed to be empowered not through giving them the special status of an oppressed and underprivileged group but through denying them that status and showing that women do not have to be treated any differently than men. It is emphasized that gender roles, divisions, and conflicts encumber both men and women equally.

Interestingly, Ukrainian women who have undergone assistance training mobilize the term "gender" to open up the meaning of "women/ women's issues". Although "gender" remains a specialized term with no equivalent in Russian or Ukrainian, some Ukrainian women perceive that it allows them to dispute the assistance on its own terms by showing their proficiency in the assistance language and, thus, their own "professionalism". In the next chapter I move to the other site of interaction – within local NGOs. By taking the same three steps – from assistance, to civil society, to women's NGOs – I elicit the stability as well as transformations of discursive centers of the civil society assistance discourse.

Chapter 6: At a women's NGO.

This chapter explores what sustains the civil society assistance discourse on the ground and more specifically within women's NGOs located outside of the Ukrainian capital.[476] Below I lay out the mechanisms through which the assistance discourse is sustained and/or reinterpreted in interactions on the ground and discuss how these discursive mechanisms structure the nature and activities of NGOs and define their conditions of possibility. As with the previous chapters, the goal is to bring out the interaction between actors as well as between concepts. I answer three related questions: what it means to be assisted, what it means to be(come) an NGO, and what it means to be addressing a gender or women's issue.

According to the Bakhtinian framework of dialogical discourse analysis, this site of interaction is characterized by fewer immediate encounters. This means that, especially on the most general questions of the meanings of assistance (in section 6.1.), the interaction takes place more on the level of the symbolic and the imaginary rather than on the level of practical rules of the game (as in Kiev). Moreover, this site of interaction is the most fragmented one – geographically as well as discursively. Given this complexity of the site, my primary focus in this chapter remains on capturing local responses to and understandings of the civil society assistance discourse – a more modest task than reconstructing the whole range of discourses that characterize this site of interaction.

In the first section I investigate the crucial convergence between the imported notion of assistance and the local opposition between the "West" and *sovok* (Soviet legacy). I argue that this convergence is what facilitated the acceptance of assistance as teaching and the symbolic importance it has in the local context. Importantly, this also grants legitimacy to the forms of knowledge that come from the outside. In the second section, I look more specifically at assistance to civil society and investigate the workings of three discursive centers – "capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability" – that I have identified as key to the civil society assistance discourse also in the other two localities/ sites of interaction. Within local NGOs these discursive centers are largely sustained through the notions of "trainings" and "information" and are reinterpreted on the basis of a local notion of "professionalism". The new meanings that they acquire locally makes these discursive centers operate in a much more individualized and even privatized capacity than in the other sites of interaction. "Trainings" and "information" ensure short-term security for the NGOs that

[476] Even though both NGOs in Kiev and those outside of the capital have different levels of access to the various resources available from foreign donors, their location (in Kiev or outside) remains crucial for their development.

accommodate them most efficiently, as they provide a direct entry to donors' resources and adherence to donor's agendas and practices. However, in the longer term the effects are an over-emphasis of the format at the expense of the content of NGO activities and an aggravation rather than mitigation of the impact of the volatile socio-economic situation in Ukraine on the NGOs. In the third section I adopt a specific thematic focus on gender and women's issues. I analyze how the discursive centers of "women as victims", "gender", and "women's empowerment" are retranslated and reinterpreted within local NGOs dealing with gender and women's issues.

6.1. Assistance: "The West Is the Best"?

The purpose of this section is to explore what it means for local women's NGOs to be assisted as described so far. I show how this meaning is sustained through the convergence between assistance as teaching and the home-grown opposition between the "West" and *sovok* (Soviet legacy).

In the local Ukrainian discourse the "West" is not a reference to specific countries, rather it is an idealized notion of what (post-) Soviet Ukraine is not, but would like to become. In this sense it is different from the concept of "world/ international community" that developed in Kiev, which refers to the actual interactions with professional actors from countries like the US or EU member states. The concept of the "West" is loaded with ideas of prosperity, opportunity, and of being accepted by the "world community", being recognized as one of the "developed and civilized countries". It is not prescriptive in the sense that it does not promote a particular model of development; rather, it embodies the aspiration to change and the willingness to accommodate many different models that come from the outside. These ideas of "catching up" and of "progress" converge to a certain degree with the donors' discourse of "assistance"/"transition". The "West" is considered a standard to look up to, a "civilized world". Historically, it has a certain positive ring about it because during the Soviet period Ukrainians were deprived of direct access to it, and were often led to believe it was an antipode to everything that was bad about the Soviet system. After the collapse of the Soviet system, synchronizing with the "West" is seen as a way to bridge this gap and to prove that Ukrainians are capable of leading a "civilized life" according to "proper" standards. In many interactions that I had in Ukraine the "West" is identified as a reference point on many levels – from the functioning of political institutions to the quality of consumer goods.

This local discourse has facilitated the convergence between the Western discourse on "assistance" as top-down teaching of Ukraine by the "West" and the local discourses and practices, thus making assistance part of the local reality rather than just an import. The resulting locally negotiated meaning of assistance emphasizes the need and the importance of adopting western models and developing the ties with the Western world. One should not underestimate the significance of these discursive centers for the way in which the interaction between assistance agencies and the local NGO leaders has developed. These meanings

facilitated the acceptance of being influenced from the outside, and they stand for the locally attributed legitimation of "being assisted". This argument, however, should not be read as claiming that the locals were naïve in their interpretation of assistance or blind to its drawbacks. On the contrary, they have taken up different meanings of "assistance" in creative ways. If we want to understand the effects of assistance on local NGOs, it is key to look at what forms and meanings assistance takes as it goes outside of the donor's office.

In order to understand the encounter between American assistance and Ukrainians, one first has to look into some concepts through which the latter had related to the "West" before the collapse of the Soviet Union. As some personal accounts I collected in Ukraine indicate, seven decades of the Soviet state in Ukraine[477] were marked by a rigid opposition between this socialist country and the capitalist "West" that was constantly reinforced through ideological propaganda as well as the complete impossibility of immediate access to the reality of the "West". In the popular perception, however, the "West" became an embodiment of everything the Soviet state was not. Moreover, as people were becoming disillusioned with the Soviet system, it acquired a positive connotation (although, of course, not for everyone in the same way). The "West" was imagined as a land of plenty, a "really existing"[478] example of a truly functioning democracy and market economy, the place where all the wished for things not conceivable under socialism could easily come true. The increasing disillusionment with the Soviet system and the belief that the alternative could be looked up in the "West" can actually be seen as some of the factors that facilitated the collapse of the Soviet Union. Well before the actual encounter, the idea of the "West" held a significant place in the (post-) Soviet symbolic order.

As my fieldwork experience indicates, developments in Ukraine are widely discussed in relation to the actual or imagined situation in the "West" also today. Interestingly, knowing that I was coming from a Western institution, some people I interviewed referred to the (perceived) difference between Ukraine and the "West". Sometimes when asking for an explanation for why things function one way or another, I would be told that it was "simply because here it is not the West, you know." In other words, people measured Ukrainian problems in terms of the overall distance of the Ukrainian situation from that in the "West". The concept of the "West" also holds one of the central places in the visions of an alternative future, of things that should come now that socialism has withered away. These ideas are directly linked to a new post-Soviet notion of "professionalism", which is a notion that captures the post-Soviet inspirations to learn new skills and acquire new professions. I will explore the workings of the notion of "professionalism" in more detail in the next section.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "West's" opposite, the notion of socialism transformed from something that defined people's existence in very real ways to a symbolic

[477] Here seventy years are counted from the first proclamation of the Soviet state, which initially included the east of Ukraine and a few years later Kiev. Other parts in the west of Ukraine were annexed to the Soviet Ukraine later, on the basis of the secret Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact of 1939 and after the Second World War.

[478] "Really existing" is a reference to a cliché widely used in official Soviet propaganda on "really existing socialism".

notion of a historical legacy. It received a derogatory name - *sovok*[479] – that was used to refer to everything that people saw as typical of the socialist system and were hoping to overcome – from the old consumer goods and services to the mentality associated with the system. The notion of *sovok* embodied a widely shared belief and aspiration that new models had to be introduced and old ways extirpated. Thinking in terms of this opposition is widespread in Ukraine even now, since everyone in their thirties or older has experienced the Soviet system and its collapse.

This discourse is also very visible among NGOs. For example, the Memorandum of the League of Resource Centers reads: "The level of awareness of Ukrainian citizens remains post-totalitarian: the values of civic responsibility have not been formed and the traditions that would help develop civil society in Ukraine are absent."[480] Here the values and the mentality of Ukrainians are presented as backward, and the development of civil society is seen as impeded by them. The quote below introduces the solutions and the source of learning for Ukrainians that are supposed to help overcome this legacy. As one of the NGO activists trained at the Counterpart Creative Center Trainer School put it: "If we want to be a part of Europe, to become a *world accepted* country, world accepted nation, we need employees that have *international worldwide vision*. And the trainings help us prepare such people."[481] This quote introduces two important ideas: the aspiration to become a "world accepted" country, in which the "world" means first and foremost developed countries, and the construction of an "international worldwide vision" as a new mentality for which the "West" serves as a reference point.

In this way, the propagandistic Soviet opposition between capitalism and socialism was not given up after the collapse of the Soviet Union but reinvested with new meaning. The new meaning of the "West" is based on the aspiration to catch up and to re-enter the world community. Much significance is attributed to proving that "we are not like some developing country, we are good enough to be part of the civilized world." Adopting the Western models and making them work in Ukraine is an important part of the new meaning of the "West". This optimistic view is of course not the only one that can be found in Ukraine, and it clearly has a stronger call for younger professionals based in metropolitan areas. Thus, the positive notion of the "West" is not an idea that exhausts the complex world of present-day Ukraine; rather it is the one that proved vital in the life of assistance on the ground. The "West", although not a clearly worked out concept, is a discursive center that helps accommodate the idea of assistance as teaching and holds together the discourse of being assisted.

Being assisted in terms of learning from the "West" means that NGOs have to look up to their foreign donors and their Western counterparts to receive guidance as to their

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[479] In addition to the phonetic similarity between the words *sovok* and Soviet, the literal meaning of *sovok* is "dustpan". It is this parallel with a dull household object that gives the word its derogatory connotation.
[480] League of Resource Centers. *Memorandum of the League of Resource Centers*, October 15, 2003 [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua.
[481] Counterpart Creative Center. *Trainings* [cited 20 July 2005. Available from http://www.ccc.kiev.ua, *emphasis added.*

identities and possible and meaningful activities. Illustrative is the history of one of the women's NGO that I visited. Its director Liliia Kim recalled the following beginnings:

> We had our first conference, and our mayor at the time suggested me as a president of the Women's Fund. That was in 1994, and I really had no clue what we were going to do in the beginning. Then in 1995 I went to Beijing, where I met lots of women and I understood that *we were really lagging behind over here*. So I started to explore, to ask about the foundations, how to write grant proposals, and so we started to write projects, started working.[482]

This NGO was initiated by a new team of civil servants as part of a democracy reform package that, as I discussed earlier, had a strong NGO component. However, the activities of this NGO only gained form and content after its leader was exposed to similar practices in the "West"; and for her "working" itself became synonymous with applying for grants and interacting with foreign donors. Thus, the innovation here comes from the "West", or rather from the local understanding of what the "West" is.

Similar framings of assistance can be found, for example, in the description of the history of the League of Resource Centers:

> The experience of civil society development in Western countries has long ago been generalized and the state and development of the Third Sector researched. Educational courses on different aspects of NGO management have been designed on the basis of such research. Since 1993 this *knowledge* together with the financial support has started coming to Ukraine.[483]

As is evident from the quoted paragraph, the development of civil society in Western countries is assumed to be an appropriate model also for Ukraine. The interchangeability of the term "civil society" with the "Third Sector" that is increasingly common in the assistance discourse is also taken for granted. Moreover, a slight frustration slips through in the text – since the "West" has had these experiences before and done its "homework" by writing them up in neat guidelines, why would one want to reinvent the wheel? In other words, the fact that the "West" holds the appropriate knowledge is framed as widely accepted. The legitimacy granted to Western models is enhanced by the choice of the word "knowledge" and its position in the sentence – it is mentioned first, as something of higher importance than, in this case, financial resources. These ideas area also captured in the quote below: "While in *other countries* the Third Sector is well developed, and non-governmental non-for-profit organizations *act professionally* to tackle certain social issues, in Ukraine they have been developing mostly in an *amateurish* way."[484] What is constructed in this quote is an opposition

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[482] Kim, 20 April 2005, interview by the author, emphasis added.
[483] League of Resource Centers. *History of the League*, December 4, 2003 [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua/, emphasis added.
[484] Deichakivskiy, Mykola, Oleksandr Sydorenko, and Natalia Iasko. *Tretii Sektor V Ukraini Ta Organizatsii Shcho Rozbudovuiut' Ioho Infrastrukturu [Third Sector in Ukraine and the Organizations That Build up Its Infrastructure]*. Kiev, 1996.

between the outside – "other countries" – and Ukraine, in which the former is defined as "well developed" and "professional", while the latter is "developing" and "amateurish". From this opposition comes the justification for learning and "catching up".

Introducing things that come from the outside has a strong legitimacy. This, however, does not mean that these things really exist in the "West" – talking of "import" is somewhat misleading here. The relevant models were not brought back into the country by Ukrainians with a thorough knowledge of the western context. Instead, they originate in the *imaginary* "West". Quite telling in this context is another notion, the use of which goes far beyond the realm of NGOs or of assistance. It is the notion of "euro". Contrary to what an English speaker would assume, it has very little to do with Europe. "Euro"-offices, "euro"-standards, "euro"-services are not copied from the standards and services that exist in various European contexts. Instead, the prefix "euro" is meant to signify that the things it defines belong to a new, non-*sovok* lifestyle. The distinction between these notions and the actual practices in Western or European countries is important. It highlights the fact that the locally perceived legitimacy of introducing Western practices into the Ukrainian context is divorced from the actual Western practices and has more to do with the home-grown discourse of catching up with the imaginary "West".

I argue that the opposition between the "West" and the *sovok* has proven crucial in the interaction between Western donors and local recipients of assistance. The discourse of assistance as a transfer of knowledge has been enhanced by the local ideas about the "West". They have allowed Ukrainians to share with foreign donors in the belief that models had to be imported from the "West", and that foreigners had something to say that was of value for Ukrainians. This finding is important because it shows that the idea of introducing Western models into the Ukrainian society was seen as valuable and legitimate not only by foreign donors but also by Ukrainians. It adds a new dimension to the story of the "locals" making pragmatic use of Western resources by pointing out that assistance has not only a material but also a symbolic significance for its recipients. However, as the discourse and practice of "being assisted" developed, a tension emerged between the idealistic notions of the "West" and the actual practices of receiving assistance. To explore this further, I look into the specific case of assistance to NGOs.

6.2. Civil Society: "Professionals without a Profession"

This section explores what "being assisted" means for a particular subset of assistance recipients – NGOs. It investigates what it means to be(come) an NGO in Ukraine and examines the reinterpretations on the ground of the discursive centers that I have identified as key for civil society assistance: "capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability". In order to understand these reinterpretations I look into the meaning of a local notion of "professionalism" that has simultaneously facilitated the acceptance of American civil society assistance discourse and prepared the ground for the main transformations in the meaning of

its key discursive centers, taking them away from their "original" meaning. I explore these transformations by identifying and analyzing the workings of such key notions as "trainings" and "information".

As I have shown in the previous section, the notion of *sovok* as a "wrong mentality" has justified a certain degree of acceptance of Western models; it has also facilitated the emergence of another important discursive center, that of "professionalism" as the "right" kind of mentality. Adhering to ideals of "professionalism" has made people more self-critical and more open to learning and training. It has also meant that successfully synchronizing with some "Western" ways is perceived as an achievement in and of itself.

As some Ukrainians emphasized in their conversations with me, "professionalism" as a notion did not exist within the socialist discourse. People were expected to work because it was ideologically right. They were seen as little mechanisms within the large machine of the socialist state. Individuals were subordinated to the bigger authority of the "system" in both their private and public lives. At the workplace there was little incentive to perform beyond the expected minimum (or rather "maximum") or to innovate. Illustrative is one of the Soviet sayings: "Initiative is punishable." In the post-Soviet period, the notion of "professionalism" became one of the key anti-*sovok* notions, a way to break away from the constraints of the old system and to put the individual back into the symbolic order of the post-Soviet society.

The convergence of "professionalism" with the discourse of assistance is important for understanding the direction in which Ukrainian NGOs developed. In the early 1990s Ukrainians were eager (but also forced by difficult circumstances) to acquire new qualifications, to learn new, better marketable techniques, and to master new professions. In this context, many also perceived NGOs as a new form of employment. This convergence enabled the creation of a whole infrastructure of NGOs whose sole purpose is claimed to be the improvement of "professionalism" of NGOs as well as of networks of NGO experts and professionals. An example is the network of resource centers, which is defined in the language of managerial effectiveness: "The *ineffective management* of the increasing number of NGOs in Ukraine called for the creation of organizations that would aim at delivering professional assistance to other NGOs." A related idea is that for these goals to be achieved real "NGO specialists" are needed: "Creating resource centers in Ukraine will yield the biggest *effect* if they combine in a national network and increase their *specialization* in the functions in which the *specialists* of respective centers have reached the highest level of *professionalism.*"[485]

The centers position themselves in business-like terms:

> The League of Resource Centers of Ukraine connects organizations that work *professionally* on the development of the Third Sector in Ukraine. This means that the Kirovograd Creative Initiatives Support Center *offers its clients a full package of services* that are characteristic of an NGO resource center.[486]

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[485] League of Resource Centers. *History of the League.*

[486] League of Resource Centers. *Members of the League*, 2002 [cited 10 June 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua/, emphasis added

The corporate language of "services" and "clients" turns NGO activities into technical operations. The actual "clients" with their concerns and in their diversity are absent from the reports of these NGOs. They are left anonymous, and their possible uses of the "services" offered remain obscure. The Resource Center for the Development of Civil Society Organizations "GURT" (Kiev) lists the following "services" it offers: "trainings and seminars, consultations, looking for partners, disseminating information about social events, and administering events and programs."[487] What is striking is that these "services" are presented in a way that makes them completely devoid of their own content. I illustrate this tendency further in the next sub-section dedicated to the notion of "trainings".

6.2.1. Capacity building though trainings

"Professionalism" of NGOs is attained through certain tools, the most prominent of which is "trainings". As I have shown in the previous chapter, in Kiev "trainings" are one of the key tools that fall under the notion of "capacity building". On the local level of a women's NGO, however, they transform into a powerful discursive center in and of itself. I argue that this is illustrative of an important impact of assistance locally – technical tools acquire a life and a meaning of their own and often push out other more specific notions or ideas.

The early experience of Ukrainians with "trainings" was not unproblematic. Many women felt ill at ease with sitting in a circle, doing team-building and "ice-breaking" exercises, having a round-about discussion instead of getting directly to the point. Others thought it childish and school-like that Americans were fond of drawing little schemes on those portable boards they brought to every meeting or training. Not only were these formats not commonly used for other public meetings organized by the locals, they did not fit with the teaching methods and educational formats in which Ukrainian audiences were trained. This disconnect made it easy for many Ukrainians to dismiss the whole message as "stupid" and "primitive", adding to somewhat pejorative attitudes towards American culture in general. Even more importantly, however, these formats were conflated with "assistance" itself. In other words, being assisted meant learning these formats.

The concept of "trainings" embodies more than just a kind of activity: This seemingly technical term orders the discourse that defines the purposes and the forms of activities conducted by an NGO. It defines the skills and tools that have to be attained for the purposes of establishing and successfully running an NGO, thus implying that there is a well-defined way to be(come) an NGO. I argue that the notion of "trainings" has a strong prescriptive influence on how NGOs emerge and function. In this subsection I explore the "life" of trainings within a local NGO.

"Trainings" include a multitude of mostly technical rather than substantive topics, such as training modules on planning, financial management, public relations, fundraising, project design, project management, report writing, etc. The idea of delivering a training is

[487] Ibid.

disembodied from a specific problematic or a target group; almost any interactive exchange can be framed as a training. "Trainings" are meant to give (potential) NGO personnel certain tools for establishing and running an NGO; the elaborate programs of these trainings emphasize the importance of expertise in the technicalities of setting up and managing an NGO. The biggest emphasis is placed on acquiring new skills, learning new techniques, and taking up new formats. Through trainings on organizational capacity an NGO is constructed not as a means to an end but as an intricate prescription that has to be adhered to regardless of the ends. The way training modules are spread around the country reveals the assumption that the format of NGO activities should be the same regardless of the kind of work they do. There is a core of techniques that are believed to be universally important.

"Trainings" are meant to deliver the basic skills that are believed to be the basis for qualifying as an NGO in the first place. The assumption is that succeeding in having an NGO is an achievement in and of itself. Thus, establishing an NGO is seen as a tangible outcome of various projects (as opposed to focusing on what those projects did for local communities, for example). One of the key results that are often presented at the end of trainings or other projects is the creation of a new NGO. This is, for example, the case with the Youth City Council project in Rivne. This project, funded by the Counterpart Partnership Alliance, is now registered as a youth NGO, "Youth Council", in the city of Rivne. At the end of a Eurasia Foundation Resource Centers project as well, two members of the League of Resource Centers registered two new organizations.

The aim of a training is not to make new skills and techniques work in a certain environment but to spread them further. For example, the Volyn Resource Center has a project called "The School of Developing Local Resources for NGOs", in which it conducts trainings of 20 competitively selected NGOs throughout Ukraine. The main goal is to turn the trained NGOs into "models" for developing local resources and make them capable of training others themselves. Thus, the goal of the project is not to apply a particular methodology to some local issues but to replicate it within other organizations. This points to a significant tendency in the development of NGOs in Ukraine. The emphasis that is placed on the importance of acquiring technical skills and on successful management has an impact not only on the content and form of the trainings themselves but also on the direction in which trainings are taken afterwards, i.e. their after-project life.

One of the significant outcomes here is that Ukrainians are first of all trained to train others rather than trained to apply the new skills elsewhere. The director of the GURT Resource Center Vasylyna Dybaylo is quoted as saying the following about her participation in the "train-the-trainer" program organized by UCAN for its grantees: "The training and coaching I received was the most unique and effective I have ever received. It will profoundly and concretely affect my work as a trainer. I have learned how to use innovative teaching techniques and how to teach fresh materials."[488] This quote reflects the rationale of trainings

[488] UCAN. *Working for a Stronger Ukraine: Practical Resources to Help Civil Society Organizations Succeed.* Kiev: UCAN, 2003.

that are meant to improve trainings. It refers to the vast experience Dybaylo has already had with trainings and shows her commitment to continue offering trainings further.

The need for organizational capacity trainings is framed as a commonsensical idea that there has to be an NGO in place before meaningful civic action can happen. The idea that NGOs have to be preceding their initiatives created a phenomenon that I term an "NGO set" - several organizations in one created by the same leader(s) to cater to different types of projects with different eligibility criteria. One such set that I have researched counts seven different organizations run by the core personnel of five women working together since 1994. The agenda of the respective NGOs in this set reflects the shifts in the funding priorities of major donors. Among other projects, the set features a women's credit union since 1997, a women's crisis center and a shelter for victims of domestic violence since 1998, and a recently formed youth club.

"Trainings" connect directly to the discourse of assistance as teaching. One of their most important functions is the construction of learning and expertise. The skills necessary to run an NGO cannot be developed on the basis of experience in a certain area; they have to be taught by qualified experts. Thus, the role of "NGO experts" is significant. "Trainers" are the people who have not only been trained themselves on specific topics but also passed through "trainings of trainers", thus acquiring a new marketable qualification. Conducting a "training" is a skill in high demand in the NGO world. Again, the implication is that trainings are not seen as a means to acquire a tool that could be utilized in some future activities; they are themselves valuable skills that can be turned into an activity in its own right. There also emerges a professional divide on the basis of trainings. Being proficient in "trainings" creates a certain affinity among the groups that belong to the "training" network. In this sense, "trainings" work as a kind of gate-keeping mechanism towards the groups and NGOs that have not had this kind of experience and cannot demonstrate the same skills.

From the beginning, training services were offered at a rate higher than the actual demand for them, and thus a discourse developed simultaneously on why it is important to pass through a training – to justify their new skills "trainers" had to develop a discourse on its significance. "Trainings" were hooked into the idea of "professionalism", in a way creating a divide between the 'ins' and 'outs' of the training world, a socialization pattern that would define the "right" trajectory of NGO development. For example, the League of Resource Centers and its members position themselves counter the first civil society organizations that are said to have had "badly concealed political goals" from the very beginning and to have engaged mainly in protest actions. The organizations that grew out of these earlier civil society groups and

> … their leaders received the experience and the skills of running an organization *only* through the actual day-to-day experience, from their personal life experience, and drawing on their previous education. *Expert knowledge* of NGO *management* was practically inaccessible in Ukraine at the time.[489]

[489] League of Resource Centers. *History of the League*, emphasis added.

Here indigenous concerns and daily experiences are subordinated to the "expert knowledge" that is framed as a much sought-after resource.

The importance of technical expertise is spread through the language itself, which employs a great deal of jargon, making it at times impenetrable for a lay person. Here my own fieldwork experience is illustrative. Many of my interviews conducted in Russian and Ukrainian were transcribed by a Ukrainian research assistant, who had done this kind of work before but not with interviews on this particular topic. As I got back to my office and started listening to the interviews, I was surprised to discover many passages either missing or full of mistakes that, at times, changed the meaning to its complete opposite. Upon closer inspection, I realized that the person simply could not follow some of the interviewees whose speech was heavy with technical terms and English words. Frustrated at first, I then became excited about being pointed by an outsider to something that both I and my informants – steeped in our common language of NGO expertise – were taking for granted. The lack of intelligibility of the NGO language came through at once.

To illustrate this issue, I offer the following quote from one of the NGO web sites, which reads: "Civil society organizations need increasingly more services ranging from very simple ones (technical assistance, trainings) to more significant ones (facilitation, lobbying)."[490] Here, "technical assistance" is a term that is not self-evident for outsiders to the assistance world; one would need to explain what kind of assistance is meant. Also, most people would connect lobbying to US politics and would not see its applicability to the Ukrainian context. "Trainings" and "facilitation" are transliterated English words that have no meaning at all outside of the NGO – donor community. The use of cryptic language that sounds vague and supposedly clever and the proliferation of technical terms and English words create a boundary of "professionalism", an insider jargon that keeps at a distance those who have not mastered it. This tendency sits uncomfortably with the idea of self-sustainability or even independence of NGOs. Ironically, both are the key objectives of many donor programs.

The transformations of the discursive centers described above show how the same concept can change its meaning in significant ways when it is employed in a different site of interaction. However, these transformations do not make these notion less powerful. For example, the impact of the discursive center of "trainings" can be seen in the way NGOs absorb the format and allow it to substitute for other kinds of activities that they can be performing. In this sense, the format of what an NGO should be and how it should function has taken over the NGO world at the expense of the content. This tendency is also visible in the way the meaning of "empowerment" has changed tremendously compared to its understanding in Washington DC.

[490] Volyn Resource Center. *About Us*, February 17, 2005 [cited 11 June 2005. Available from www.vrc.rv.ua.

6.2.2. Empowerment through information

Another donor-introduced discursive center - "empowerment" and specifically the idea of empowerment through information - is substantially transformed within local NGOs. "Information" is constructed as something that has a value in and of itself, regardless of what kind of information it is and through what kinds of channels it is disseminated. Just to illustrate this point: Out of 31 projects supported by grants that were administered by the Creative Center Counterpart (a Kiev-based NGO that among other activities administered the grants from EU Tacis and the EU-US Transatlantic Initiative) in 1996-97, 18 mention as their goal or their primary activity "information and consultation services", "to create information-methodology center", "to increase information flow", "to improve knowledge", "to provide information", "to spread ideas", "to conduct seminars and trainings", "to create information-education center", "to share information."[491] Also the following quote shows that information is believed to be a sufficient means of civic intervention: "To promote citizen participation we have published seven brochures dedicated to the activities of the Third Sector and two 'Guides of Chernihiv NGOs' that contain exhaustive information about fifty active city NGOs," says the AHALAR Resource Center in Chernihiv.[492]

For the majority of NGOs whose work I researched, acting on an issue involves first and foremost disseminating information on that issue. Moreover, very often the information does not have to be connected to a specific issue at all. The idea that NGOs are there to be hubs of information is so naturalized that no explanation of the purpose of that information is required. NGOs engage in a range of activities aimed at disseminating information, such as consultations, seminars, and roundtables and in institutions dedicated to disseminating information, such as resource centers. The League of Resource Centers sees its role in "disseminating the information about *the role of the Third Sector in a developed society* among broader public, private and public structures."[493] Here the information is important not because of the work that NGOs do but because the Third Sector plays an important role in any "developed society". Here one can again see the connection to the notion of the "West" as an embodiment of the state of being "developed".

Framing NGO activities in terms of "information" facilitates increased flexibility for people working in an NGO in terms of their priorities and activities. It supports the practice of diversifying agendas (and, thus, sources of income) as much as possible, while at the same time ensuring maximum continuity in NGO structures of activities and personnel. To ensure inflow of grants, NGOs have to follow donors' priorities rather closely. To make sure they

[491] Counterpart Creative Center. "Activity Report for 1996-2001." Kiev: CCC, 2002.
[492] League of Resource Centers. *Members of the League.*
[493] League of Resource Centers. *About Us*, 2002 [cited 17 July 2005. Available from http://www.ligarc.org.ua.

don't miss the boat, NGOs invest in the stability of the format of their activities at the expense of the content of what they do. For example, a woman told me during one of my first interviews back in 2001: "Strange you are interested in women's NGOs: really, you see, you don't do women these days, now all the funding is going to youth programs." Acting on her own advice, she is now the head of a youth NGO that often combines work on women's issues with the theme of youth by, for example, organizing education activities for girls.

NGOs do not have to have expertise in a certain issue area to be able to disseminate information on it. Since every new topical interest of the donors comes with funds available for supporting the associated "information and awareness campaigns" throughout the country, there is always a way to claim eligibility for those funds. In the case of the USAID-supported nation-wide anti-trafficking initiative, the topic became so popular in the late 1990s that roughly half of all women's NGOs introduced it onto their agendas. For example, an NGO dating back to 1995 started off by conducting mainly humanitarian, social safety net activities; then in 1998 the organization initiated a crisis center for women who suffer from domestic violence. Currently, its agenda is summarized as follows:

> DANA is currently focusing on civic education, emphasizing human rights, legislative activity, and a program directed against trafficking in women. It has raised public interest in this problem and created much press and TV attention on the issue. Thanks to DANA, a compulsory course in human rights was introduced into Ukraine's schools as a result of its efforts.[494]

Another organization says its goal is "to promote democratization in Ukraine; to provide help to women and children that suffer from domestic violence; [and] to facilitate the growth of women's NGOs in Ukraine."[495] Among its many varied activities, the NGO reports to be offering legal, psychological, and medical services to battered women and their children; organizing lunches and concerts for the disabled, veterans, and orphans; working with mass media and publishing newsletters and brochures; reading lectures to teenagers on prevention of trafficking and on the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs; and doing psychological trainings with women-prisoners.

Such eclectic NGO agendas make it sound like some of them are really inducing a profound change in several important fields (although the sheer range of activities seems an overstretch for any one NGO). In fact, they are disseminating "information" on every funding-eligible topic they come across. The implication is that NGOs do not develop expertise in a particular area or deepen their knowledge of a particular problem. Instead, they find it possible and meaningful to be doing everything and nothing at the same time.

To summarize, the discursive centers of "capacity building" and "empowerment" have found embodiment in two core notions of "trainings" and "information" that define the discourse on the ground on what an NGO should and can possibly do. The workings of the notion "trainings" are such that it inflates the space and the importance attributed to the

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[494] DANA. *About Dana* [cited 29 June 2005. Available from http://www.civilsoc.org/nisorgs/ukraine/dana.htm.
[495] Mir Zhenshchin. *The History of Our Organization/ Unpublished Brochure*. Kharkov, 2001.

format and the technicalities of managing an NGO and performing NGO-related activities. This prevents the NGOs from putting the format at the service of the content and the goals of activities. At the same time, the notion of "information", instead of deepening the knowledge of NGOs, has translated into the idea and practice of having eclectic agendas and of not focusing on results. This brings me to the third discursive center of the civil society assistance discourse – "sustainability". As I have shown, both "trainings" and "information" work in a way that kidnaps/hijacks the incentive of NGOs to define the purpose of their activities and to aim at tangible results. This promotes short-term thinking about the plans and aspirations of a particular NGO. These tendencies conflict with the volatility of the socio-economic context in Ukraine that, to the contrary, makes people over-emphasize the importance of "securing the future" and "ensuring stability". I explore this tension further in the next sub-section dedicated to local understandings of "sustainability".

6.2.3. Sustainability: Sitting on suitcases or finding the right business?

The donor-supported idea of "sustainability" is tightly connected to reproducing NGOs and enhancing their dialogue with the donors. The incentive to reproduce NGOs is strengthened by the services that are made available to them. For example, the Volyn Resource Center reports on having offered

> 568 consultation and information services to NGOs of Rivne and Volyn oblast in 2000 on the following issues: information about the programs of donor organizations, strategic planning for NGOs, writing projects to international donor organizations, accounting, and forming and registering an NGO.[496]

This is a list of what one might need to know to be able to qualify for receiving NGO grants from various donors. In addition, the same resource center reports to be

> regularly organizing presentation meetings between foreign funds' representatives and NGOs, spreading information that it receives from the funds, researching the Internet, and consulting other NGOs on the expediency of applying to particular funding structures. An additional service is offered to ease the communication between NGOs and foreign partners – the translation of projects, letters, and general information about the activities of a particular fund.[497]

This naturalizes the idea that NGOs become successful and meaningful first and foremost through their connection to the donors. As a result, sustainability is defined in terms of proximity to the world of assistance, and the way to help NGOs is believed to be to socialize them into the culture of donor projects. This points to the power of the assistance discourse in that it managed to introduce "being assisted" as the only way forward for local NGOs.

[496] League of Resource Centers. *Members of the League.*
[497] Ibid.

However, this donor-inspired meaning of sustainability is largely contested on the ground. It is admitted here that the activities that are funded in the name of sustainability – such as the Resource Centers - are not only limited in ensuring sustainability but are also often unsustainable themselves.

> The League of Resource Centers in its present form is not well fit to exercise a systematic influence on the activities of the Third Sector in Ukraine. The potential of separate organizations is not sufficient since the coordination mechanism between them is underdeveloped.[498]

There are conflicting ideas about the sustainability of resource centers. According to Svitlana Suprun, Civil Society Consultant at the Mott Foundation:

> We sincerely hope that in the next phase of their development, the NGOs served by these resource centers will continue to substantially contribute to the strengthening of the civil society in Ukraine. We recognize that many centers will select new routes to advance their goals and *may no longer exist as resource centers*. Some will transform into training centers; some will become charitable foundations. Some resource centers *may even close down* as their personnel shift to other NGOs, businesses, or local government. All this reflects the evolutionary trends facing the development of Ukrainian civil society.[499]

What creeps into these quotes is a doubt as to how sustainable these centers are once left to their own devices. Since practically all the funding was invested into strengthening the capacity of those particular NGOs and links between them, expressing such doubt means more than just speculating about the future. It puts in question almost eight years of assistance to resource centers as well as the idea that they have to be assisted at all as a means to improve the "sustainability" of Ukrainian civil society. While the proximity to donors' procedures and agendas (as ensured by "trainings" and "information") and donors' funds improves the short-term sustainability of NGOs to a significant extent, it stands in conflict with ideas about their long-term sustainability.

The homegrown notion of sustainability is very different from that of the donors and, in fact, does not depend on either "trainings" or "information". It is also rarely embedded in the idea of an NGO itself. In fact, very few NGO activists I met see the NGO itself as their main focus of activity for the coming decade or beyond. They are either constantly "sitting on their suitcases,"[500] despairing about the lack of clarity about the future, or complementing their activities with other "side businesses" (*pobochniy biznes*).

An example of the former is one of the "Women for Women" centers that I visited in 2003, i.e. roughly one year before the funding for the Winrock Trafficking Prevention Project

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[498] League of Resource Centers. *History of the League.*

[499] Suprun, interview quoted in Eurasia Foundation. *Eurasia News, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine. NGO Resource Centers: Time of Changes.* Kiev: Eurasia Foundation, 2003-2004 (Winter # 4), emphasis added.

[500] *Sidet' na chemodanah* is an expression that means one lives with an idea that one might need to move at any moment.

(TPP) was due to run out. The biggest concern of the organization back then was what they could possibly do in the after-funding phase. One of its leaders explained to me that it was most unlikely that other grants would give them an opportunity to function on the same scale, to maintain their personnel and their office space. The range of reactions the NGO was contemplating went from hoping the funding would continue to doing something completely different from trafficking prevention to giving up the idea of having an NGO altogether (at least in its present form). Clearly, these concerns were not helpful for developing a strong identity and a clear vision for the future of that NGO.

An example of the latter is an "NGO set" – several organizations in one created to cater to different types of projects with different eligibility criteria – that I encountered in Kharkov and that was partly funded through the other Winrock program on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). Apart from being a City Council deputy and in close contact with the region and the city administrations, its leader opened her own consulting company, which is now offering some of the training modules that were developed under the Winrock program. More specifically, the company bids for tenders at the City Employment Office to provide employment and business trainings throughout the whole of the Kharkov region, making around 50-60,000 UAH per month[501] and employing around 30 people as trainers. In addition, it sells specialized courses to entrepreneurs, such as on business writing, business ethics, etiquette, etc. "We understand how we can make money," the director proudly stated.[502] Another project is under way for opening a Business Internet Center that would offer information and consultancy services to businesses and connecting it to other similar centers around Ukraine. "Consulting is not very well developed yet, and for those who understand, this is a very good business. I really found my own business! All these restaurants I was doing before, I don't want to be bothered anymore."[503]

Thus, the more NGOs adhere to the discourse of "trainings" and "information", the more their activities contradict the homegrown idea of being a sustainable and long-term arrangement. The dominant discourse creates conditions of possibility for particular kinds of NGOs: formalized business-like structures, a source of employment for their staff, whose technical expertise is prioritized over the issues they address. These NGOs are characterized by eclectic and frequently shifting agendas; they also find it difficult to be clear in their purpose and their future goals. Assistance was particularly successful at producing certain types of NGOs – ones that closely resembled their American counterparts which were implementing donor programs in Ukraine. These concepts do not exhaust the story of what NGOs in Ukraine are like and what they do; however, they point best to the regularities in NGO activities that can be attributed to the impact of foreign assistance. What is striking is that, although NGOs remain central to the discourse, the discussions about the democratic role of civil society have moved out of reach.

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[501] Between eight and ten thousand euro.
[502] Kim, 20 April 2005, interview by author
[503] Kim, 20 April 2005, interview by author

6.3. Gender and Women's Issues: What Do They Mean Locally?

In the following sections I examine two discursive centers: "women as a target group" and "women's empowerment" that have structured the assistance discourse on gender and women's issues in Washington DC and in Kiev. Similarly to what I found in Kiev, both discursive centers are extensively questioned and transformed. However, the notion of "gender" is not employed in these transformations and openings; in fact, its use at local NGOs is limited. Although the term is used by local NGOs in grant projects alongside other "assistance" terms, such as "trainings" or "information", I have not found other ways of employment of "gender". For example, an NGO from Vinnitsa is implementing a project with the support of the Ukrainian Women's Fund that is aimed at "spreading the gender culture among the population of the region by organizing trainings with representatives of mass media, press clubs, and publication of information materials."[504] However, this term does not feature beyond such specialized "trainings".

6.3.1. Women as a target group: Is there really such a thing?

As I have shown in chapters four and five, an important component of the notion of "women as a target group" is the idea that women are generally oppressed, discriminated against, and tend to fall victim to violence. Trafficking and domestic violence are interesting because "assistance" played a significant role in constructing them as central women's issues. Especially with the issue of trafficking, donors' interference has made a whole world of difference, and one could safely argue that it actually created the awareness and the infrastructure aimed at resolving the problem, even if not all donor programs were equally effective in addressing it. Despite this external push that was given to raising these issues, their relevance is hardly contested locally. Most Ukrainians are genuinely concerned about these problems and do not deny or downplay their significance for Ukrainian women and society as a whole. However, what involves much negotiation and contestation are the suggested causes of these problems and the proposed solutions to them.

While in Washington DC the discourse on these issues grounds itself in the discursive center of "women as victims" and makes an unambiguous connection to the supposedly universal idea of women's subjugation and marginalization, local women go to great lengths to argue that these problems are not about women but about structural socio-economic failures in the society. Local women are particularly ill at ease with the idea that "any woman can become a victim of trafficking." This construction was forcefully imposed during the USAID-funded national awareness campaign. Ironically, these kinds of representations prompted the women working on trafficking projects to construct alternative stories, which downplay women's susceptibility to trafficking, like the following one.

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[504] UWF. *Projects Supported by UWF in 2004*.

> I have a friend who went in search for work to Italy; she had to stay in that square before she found a family to work for as a babysitter. She said she saw those people offering this kind of jobs but if you don't want to, you won't get into trouble. Of course, you have to be careful.[505]

The argument is that women are not vulnerable because they are women or because they travel abroad. There is strong resistance to the tendency to view any international migration of women as equal to trafficking.

Local reinterpretation of the discourse on trafficking has involved the substitution of this issue with a broader issue of migration. This is a way to ensure that the criminalizing and sensationalist framing of trafficking does not impact on other women who travel abroad, especially since increasing numbers of women travel abroad for work these days. It is a way to protect them from being stigmatized because of the power of the trafficking discourse. To these ends, a different locally coined term - "women returning from working abroad" - is introduced by some women's NGOs, especially those working in the areas hardest hit by illegal emigration for work purposes.

To counterbalance the trafficking discourse much space is given to discussing other experiences abroad and the importance of helping these women reconnect to their local communities when they come back. In many interviews that I have conducted in Ukraine the reasons for leaving the country for work are constructed in terms of difficult choices that people make and costs they pay, but also, importantly, in terms of pride they take in succeeding in these difficult struggles. For example, women taking care of the elderly in Italy are proud of what they are doing: "Thanks to Ukrainian women Italian elderly are taken care of; … we have basically solved welfare problems of the Italian state." "My Seniora is 82, and I have virtually raised her to her feet again because I need work. I have been consulting with my sister who is a doctor in Ukraine. My Seniora's children see this."[506] The difficulties connected with working illegally and in a strange environment often get quoted as examples of women's stamina and strength. Women are presented as the ones who took up the challenge of finding the money to feed and educate their children in times of economic despair, because women are stronger, whereas men have shown to be unable to quickly adapt to the changing situation in the country.

> Women migrate in bigger numbers; this is due to the demands on the labor market abroad but also due to Ukrainian feminine mentality. It is the mentality of a *berehynia*; [507] she would always rush to help, take the responsibility for her family; […] she goes to save her family but when she comes back the problems begin.[508]

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[505] From an interview at one of the Women for Women Centers, March 3, 2003, interview by author.
[506] From a documentary by Khabailo, Viacheslav. "*Zamky Na Pisku* [Castles on the Sand]." Ukraine, 2002.
[507] "Guardian-lady" in Ukrainian, a term especially widely used in national historiography and epos.
[508] Mruchkovska, 3 March 2003, interview by author.

The discursive center of "women returning from working abroad" helps redress the problem definition of trafficking and constructs new ideas about such notions as "vulnerability" and "trauma". It is argued by women's NGOs that "women returning from working abroad" often need assistance for dealing with traumas resulting from their experiences abroad. The "trauma", however, is being re-positioned from beyond the country's borders to the local and familiar settings. WfW staff quotes a so-called "post-immigration syndrome" – mostly psychological difficulties of reintegrating into one's own society after having spent a considerable amount of time in a different country with a higher level of economic development. This "syndrome" is believed to be aggravated by the lack of information that migrant women receive about their home countries while abroad. These women often feel unfit for re-employment in their hometowns, firstly, because they are often seen as lacking some basic skills and knowledge that are currently in demand on the labor market, and secondly, due to the dubious, almost indecent, character that is being locally ascribed to their employment abroad. "They say: we know what you've been doing there!"[509] This other "trauma" is not a part of a woman's body, like sickness; neither it is something that everyone is subjected to by the mere fact of crossing the border at her own risk (as the discursive center of "women as victims" implies). Rather it is something that is inflicted at home and, therefore, women should not be prevented from going but helped to stay abroad safely and assisted in coming back.

The contestations of the discursive center "women as victims" are also strong when it comes to the issue of domestic violence. Women who work on this issue argue that this notion often creates more problems than it helps resolve. In one of my interviews it was explained to me that

> the law on domestic violence has this article on the so-called "victim" behavior. Just today we have had a visit from a woman who went to the police to report violence against her, and they told her she had been provoking the violence herself. In cases like this, the law turns against the victim and so we want to lobby for an amendment. This has to be done with several NGOs and we've already made an agreement with the others, and passed a resolution on this.[510]

The solutions to domestic violence suggested are also closely related to the understanding of who should be helped and why. For example, most of the donor-funded activities to combat domestic violence involve various kinds of consultations and services to battered women, thus seeing them more as patients rather than as active agents. In contrast, the local agenda is often about giving the battered women tools to safeguard their positions by, for example, finding legal ways to ensure that battered women are not deprived of their homes or forced to relocate.

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[509] Myhaylyuk, 4 March 2003, interview by author.
[510] Kovtun, 20 April 2005, interview by the author

Remarkable is the example of an NGO coalition that is emerging in Kharkov to lobby for a change in the regulation concerning domestic violence. One of my respondents shared the following:

> Currently, the law on domestic violence says that battered women have a right to be provided with a shelter. We want to raise the question why those are women who have to leave together with their children, while the perpetrator stays in their common flat. What we suggest is that there should be a rehabilitation center for such men.[511]

Undoubtedly, the nature of issues like domestic violence and trafficking in women is such that it involves criminal activities against women. However, what remains open to negotiation is the definition of causes of and solutions to these problems. Local women are disturbed by the way the "women as victims" discourse naturalizes the marginal status of women; instead, in the home-grown discourse more emphasis is placed on structural gender misbalances, lack of appropriate services, and the difficult economic situation in the country.

The problematic impact of the discursive center of "women as a target group" as it is defined in Washington DC is that women are often defined in negative ways as those who lack something, who are subjugated and marginalized. This further creates a tension between women as a target group and women working at NGOs. Since the NGO sector in Ukraine is highly feminized, representations of Ukrainian women generally are of direct relevance for the image and identity of the NGO staff, and local women's NGOs are very conscious of this fact.

6.3.2. Women's empowerment is not only about women

Another way in which the discursive center of "women as a target group" is reinvented locally is through questioning the existence of such a target group altogether. The discourse that is sustained by local NGOs breaks this notion up into multiple sub-groups that can be targeted. This move is based on the assumption that women differ according to their demographics and social backgrounds, and that each of the resulting sub-groups is affected by different issues and in different ways. Between June 1999 and March 2002 Winrock International supported 13 women's organizations working on the theme of women's economic empowerment (WEE project). These projects defined a variety of target groups: unemployed women enrolled at local Employment Centers; women who were not satisfied with their salaries; women-mothers of children who suffer from consequences of the Chernobyl disaster; women from rural areas; women-farmers; women-entrepreneurs who just started their own businesses; and high school and university students. Depending on which target group an NGO worked with, it developed its own definition of the problem of women's economic empowerment and the ways in which it can be addressed.

[511] Kovtun, 20 April 2005, interview by the author.

The problem of employment is argued by women's NGOs to have regionally specific features and, therefore, to demand tailored approaches and context-sensitive definitions of target groups. For example, the Union of Rural Green Tourism in Simferopol developed an educational program tailored to promoting self-employment in the Bilohorodskiy rayon of Crimea, an area that is distinguished from other parts of Ukraine by the highest level of unemployment and the biggest number of repatriates. The Mykolayiv Women Business Support Center points out that each *rayon* of its *oblast* is characterized by a different set of problems as well as potentials; for example, Ochakiv is a resort area, Pervomaysk is mostly inhabited by the military, and Novy Bug is largely agricultural.

Another attempt at specifying the target group is evident from the work of one Women for Women Center which targets teenagers from orphanage establishments. This is a particular group that due to the circumstances of being brought up in a relatively closed environment has different head start opportunities than other young people of the same age. The definition of a target group that carries the characteristics of innocence and incompetence is narrowed down to a particular case, whereas the definition of the problem that has to be addressed is broadened to include not only trafficking, and not only illegal labor migration, but also opportunities for starting one's own life in Ukraine. "These are a group at risk indeed because they are not only unready to go abroad; they are not even ready to do anything outside of the orphanage."[512] It is through this construction of variety that the discursive center of "women as a target group" falls apart on the local level of women's NGOs. This is also evident in the way the Anti-Trafficking Initiative turns from one whole project as it is envisioned in Kiev into several (almost) unrelated sets of activities.

While in Kiev the Trafficking Prevention Program (TPP) and the Women's Economic Empowerment Program (WEE) are seen as two components of the same bigger initiative, they work with different target groups on the ground. Women Business Support Centers (WBSC) are mostly reporting on their work with women from *oblast* centers, with higher education, aged between thirty and forty. Again, the selection criteria for most business training programs are such that they are more favorable to women with life experience and clear goals rather than to innocent and ignorant girls who are often described in the TPP project.

Some of the success stories reported by Winrock International are illustrative of this bias. By the time Tetyana Aginina from Crimea came to the business training, she had already had a small hotel business in Phoros, one of the most luxurious places on the Crimean southern coast. She had gone from simply buying and renovating a house in Phoros to taking up a more proactive managerial position and turning it into a successful business. After the training, Tetyana organized a union of entrepreneurs and took up plans to include a conference hall in her hotel complex. Another training participant, Valentyna O. from Lubny

[512] Mruchkovska, March 3, 2003, interview by author.

in Poltava *oblast*, had had a steep administrative career from being a doctor to becoming the head of a local clinic. She used the knowledge from the training to start a private clinic.[513]

In fact, contrary to the idea that "women as a target group" have to be supported in their entirety, most women's NGOs that implement women's economic empowerment programs report having conducted selection procedures among the women-candidates for their trainings. Some NGOs even took pride in developing selection procedures rigorous enough to admit only the most promising candidates. For example, a women's association in Makiivka, *Zhinochiy Dar* ("Women's Gift"), developed a two-day training for women on how to find a job that is especially designed for women with university education. Other NGOs included the presentation of a business idea in their selection interviews. Such components of the women's economic empowerment program changed its focus from women-specific empowerment to the socialization of women into the business world alongside men. Many Women Business Support Centers (WBSC) also did not offer their services exclusively to women, and although men remained a minority among those who received trainings, this further impacted local definitions of "women as a target group" as well as the identities of WBSCs themselves.

These tendencies deepened after the funding from Winrock International had run out in 2004. Many of the NGOs that used to work on the women's economic empowerment program now seek to increase their after-funding sustainability by offering competitive training services to a wide range of groups, first-time entrepreneurs as well as those who need more advanced training on specific topics. Some of the WBSCs started working with the concept of a family business, for example the Chernihiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Simferopol WBSCs. They report the growth of family business, especially in small towns and villages, and suggest more work has to be done to tailor the trainings to their particular needs.

Overall, the idea of economic empowerment itself is connected to notions of economic success and entrepreneurial spirit. This spirit is argued to be shared by both men and women, a resource they have equal access to. Contrary to the idea that "women as a target group" are particularly disadvantaged due to their subjugated status as women, many women's NGOs argue that women face the same problems as men and, therefore, it is not women who have to be empowered personally but structural problems that have to be resolved. The "Kharkiv Institute of Community Development" reports on the following findings of its survey conducted among women-entrepreneurs, representatives of women's business associations, and civil servants in departments that deal with economic development and enterprise registration. According to the Institute, the problems that impede the development of small business in general are the same as those faced by women-entrepreneurs in particular. These problems fall into two broad categories: first, imperfections of public institutions, such as legislative frameworks, bureaucracy, corruption, etc.; second, lack of personal training of entrepreneurs in such areas as marketing, strategic business planning, etc.

[513] Winrock International. "Women's Economic Empowerment, Final Report".

In another survey conducted by Winrock International itself, Women Business Support Centers were asked to name the most common obstacles that women face when starting a business. Out of a long list of obstacles that were reported,[514] only a few were directly attributable to their status as women, such as births and lack of family support. In the stories that are told about the experiences of women-entrepreneurs obstacles are discussed in terms of structural and institutional failures that affect small business development in Ukraine as a whole. A business training participant, Iryna Kharchenko from Kiev *oblast*, came to the training with a long entrepreneurial experience. She had started her business in 1991 and reported that the main obstacles to her work were unfair interferences from the local government. Motivated by possible bribes and black profit, departments of the town administration terrorized her with endless inspections, a lawsuit, and unfair fines. Iryna recalled that "this led to a crash of confidence to such an extent that I stopped my work. […] Disappointment, dissatisfaction, and despair were my constant feelings."[515] Iryna saw corruption as a major factor and did not perceive it as affecting her more or differently because she was a woman.

The local discourse on "women's empowerment" through more opportunities and gender equality is quite strong, and many women like to emphasize that they are not discriminated against. In fact, the whole idea of discrimination against women is often perceived as a western import: "They have that problem there." Rather than seeing this as some kind of denial and false consciousness, I argue that these ideas point to an alternative discourse on gender and women's issues in Ukrainian civil society. Thus, tension arises between the discursive center of "women as victims" of oppression and the homegrown concerns with structural factors and gender misbalance and, ultimately, "women's empowerment" through addressing those.

6.4. Conclusion

6.4.1. What it means to be assisted

Due to the lack of direct contact with the outside world, the understanding of the assistance relationship developed locally within an NGO is more rigid than in Kiev – it draws a clearer line between 'us' and 'them', between Ukraine and the 'outside'. Local perceptions of assistance come closer to those in Washington not in terms of meaning but in terms of the rigidity of the us/them opposition that is at their basis. On the local level, the opposition is between the ideal West and the Soviet legacies embodied in the notion of *sovok*. Here the

[514] The obstacles named were: family situation; lack of start-up funds; fear of using property as collateral, or lack of collateral; high interest rates; small amounts lenders lend to first-time businesses; changing, unstable legal framework for businesses; lack of a business partner; daunting registration process; lack of character to pursue business or lack of business idea; pension reform that drives even existing businesses into the shadows.
[515] Winrock International. "Women's Economic Empowerment, Final Report", p.28.

notion of the West is rarely used to refer to a knowledge of actual practices in other countries; rather it represents an ideal of what Ukraine could become should the post-communist changes lead in the right direction.

This opposition was re-invented on the basis of Soviet ideas that were reversed into their exact opposite; or, rather, of the ideas that developed in the "parallel" society during the Soviet period and were the opposite of the official Soviet ideology. In this reversed Soviet discourse the West was not the mean capitalist oppressor but the embodiment of the world of opportunities for everyone, the world that could offer everything the Soviet state could not, economically, politically, and culturally. As a direct consequence of the insularity of the USSR, this idealistic notion of the West was not combined with much direct exposure to different aspects of life in the West. Its domestic opposite was captured by a pejorative term *sovok* – everything that was of bad quality or in bad taste in the Soviet world. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the notion of *sovok* gained even more prominence – it not only embodied dissatisfaction but also the aspiration and the perceived opportunities of change. The notion of the West, however, is only gradually losing its imaginary quality and turning into an empirical notion.

The re-invention of the East-West opposition is a complex process that develops along a whole spectrum of possible perceptions of the West and the *sovok*. What is important for assistance is that this symbolic opposition between East and West remains at the core of the discursive map that defines the 'new' assistance relationship. The rigidity of the opposition and its polarity are shared between both the providers and the recipients of assistance. Moreover, the relationship between the former and the latter replicates the West-East opposition. This accounts for a certain degree of convergence between Ukraine and its foreign donors on what had to happen with the beginning of assistance: The East and the legacies of its socialist past had to be abandoned and the West would serve as a model towards which the post-socialist East should strive.

This shared understanding (or so it is assumed to be) facilitates an agreement between different sides that the West is the source of knowledge and a legitimate example for the possible trajectory of the East. It facilitates the acceptance on the part of the Ukrainians of being assisted in the sense of being taught.

6.4.2. What it means to be(come) civil society through assistance

The understanding of "capacity building" as teaching technical skills has a strong impact on the developments within local NGOs; however, this notion takes an unexpected turn on the ground. The goals of "capacity building" shift from the institutional to the individual level. The idea of teaching technical skills is taken to its logical conclusion that these skills are an individual quality rather than an organizational component.

Local NGO leaders who have already passed a number of "trainings" comprise a new profession – that of NGO experts and specialists connected through a network. In this way, "capacity building" works to empower a select number of individuals and to maintain the

boundaries of expertise between different local NGOs and their activists. In this way, "trainings" serve as one of the core gate-keeping mechanisms; not only do they fail to contribute to the development of civil society within local contexts but they also enhance the divisions and inequalities therein. The shift from institutional to individual "capacity building" perpetuates the fragmentation, the rivalries, and the fragility of local civil society. Whereas in Washington "assistance" is defined as a guarantor of "sustainability", locally it is increasingly perceived as a factor that induces volatility.

In addition, the elements that formed part of the notion of "empowerment", such as information campaigns and education, work to redirect NGOs' priorities from long-term survival to short-term gains. This happens because the idea of educating and disseminating information is disembodied from a specific issue. The choice to "raise public awareness" on a certain issue does not come from the expertise the NGO holds but from the temporary donor driven interest in that issue. The way "information dissemination" programs are set up allows one NGO to apply for all of them without having to prove any knowledge about the issues at stake. These kinds of "empowerment" programs are a way for NGOs to tap into donors' resources by closely following the donors' shifting agendas, and so they constantly reinvent themselves at the expense of specializing in a certain area. This has eventually led to a whole local infrastructure consisting of consultations, seminars, roundtables, and resource centers. Contrary to the belief endorsed in Washington, the more these NGOs specialize in these kinds of programs, the more their long-term sustainability outside of "assistance" becomes questionable on the local level. In stark contrast to what is argued in Washington, local NGOs often frame "sustainability" as something that can only be fully attained in spite of rather than thanks to "assistance". There is a shared belief locally that many NGOs will disappear if they drop out of the "assistance" cycle. This has a strong impact on the overall political sustainability of this kind of civil society.

6.4.3. What it means to empower women

The discursive center of "women as a target group" is transformed locally in two ways. First, it is argued that this is not a meaningful category because it does not refer to a real-life group; instead, different women belong to different social and demographic groups and therefore face different problems and require different forms of assistance. Consequently, the first point of transformation is the breaking up of the category of "women as a target group" into many different sub-categories. These ideas of regional specificity and of focused definitions of target groups are both prominent in the most recent USAID anti-trafficking project, "Countering Trafficking in Persons in Ukraine," implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which I have discussed in chapter five. This is an example of how "local" ideas discussed above are incorporated at the Kiev level.

In a second transformation the discursive center of "women as a target group" is altogether substituted with other discursive centers that are based not on the idea of a target group but on the identification of different social issues that have to be addressed. In other

words, the agenda is not defined in terms of who has to be helped but in terms of what problem has to be tackled. This second transformation often leads to a different construction of women's situations, which is close to the discursive center of "gender" as it emerged in Kiev. Agendas are defined as relevant for both men and women, and the view that women face the same problems as men, rather than being subjected to particular women's grievances, empowers women because it assumes their equality to men. Issues that are directly connected to crimes against women are often rethought by NGO activists in terms of structural gender problems rather than as problems of women's oppression. Even though the term "gender" does not exist locally, most of the reinterpretations created by local women can be described by it. In other words, there is a concern with problems that men *and* women face as a result of gendered divisions and stereotypes.

Women's issues as conceived of in Washington have reached a high degree of institutionalization locally in the form of multiple crisis and consultation centers for women, all based on the assistance ideas supporting women's issues. However, the long-term sustainability of these activities is just as questionable as the sustainability of the NGOs themselves. Many are likely to abandon women's programs once the donors stop funding them. This does not add to the local legitimacy of that particular women's agenda. To increase the sustainability and the legitimacy of a women's agenda locally women's NGOs tend to either make it more specific or to open it up to the general social support of different groups. In the next, concluding chapter I elaborate at greater length on how different reinterpretations of core discursive centers travel across the three sites of interaction.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I revisit the story about the puzzling world of "public organizations" (*obshchestvennie organizatsii*) in Ukraine and their interaction with foreign assistance. I conclude that the apparent contradiction between the stated democratic goals of civil society assistance and the nature and activities of Ukrainian civic organizations that were created by assistance goes beyond problems of language competence or lack of information. I have shown that the civil society assistance discourse has introduced and enabled the domination of a particular type of civic organization: an elitist and technocratic community of "professionals without a profession". The emergence of these civic organizations has led to a range of politically problematic effects: These organizations are widely used to address private rather than public interests, they enhance elitist and undemocratic practices, and, importantly, they have substituted the politically powerful concept of civil society with a set of technical tools, thus leading to its depoliticization.

I start by redressing the main theoretical and methodological positions of the dissertation; I then summarize my findings according to the three core questions: What assistance means, what it means to assist civil society, and what it means to empower women. I answer these three questions on the basis of discursive processes that I have discovered in all three sites of interaction – Washington DC, Kiev, and local NGOs. In the last two sections I elaborate on the social and political effects that I attribute to the civil society assistance discourse, and then on the larger theoretical implications of my findings.

7.1. The Focus and the Approach

Starting off with the premise drawn from by now extensive literature on foreign assistance to civil society that there is a strong connection between foreign assistance and the development of civil society in the recipient countries, this dissertation went further to explore the mechanisms that give foreign assistance its social and political effects. More specifically, this dissertation was aimed at understanding the nature and the scope of the impact that foreign assistance has had on the development and institutionalization of civil society in Ukraine in the period from 1992 to 2005. Most of the primary material was drawn from a case study of American governmental assistance delivered to Ukrainian women's NGOs through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

There are different ways to understand and conceptualize the effects and power of foreign involvement depending on the theoretical and epistemological positions one takes. There can be the overtly coercive power of military threat or economic sanctions, which have often been referred to as the "sticks" of international relations. There are also more "soft" forms of power, such as are exerted via various systems of benefits and incentives, often labeled as "carrots" that some states offer to others.[516] Another way to look at political dynamics is by analytically separating material from ideational forms of power. Simply put, material power is imbedded in, for example, money flows or military troops – something visible and easily quantifiable; ideational power is visible in the domination of certain ideas, norms, and values over others – a form of domination that is less measurable. However, the effects of ideational power can be as clear and explicit as those of material power. The division between ideational and material power is, after all, more of an analytical tool than an empirical reality. Both "sticks" and "carrots" are a combination of acts of exerting material power and the ideas, norms, and values that define, guide, and often defend them. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War led to a shift in both ideas and practices of international and transnational relations. New ideas, including those about the value of democracy and the role of civil society, became the cornerstones of relations between "Western" countries and the former Soviet Republics. They became constitutive of new relations of power and their material effects.

To investigate the constitutive nature of ideas and systems of meaning, I adopted an interpretative-constructivist perspective that conceives of social and political processes and phenomena in terms of meaning-making. It is based on the idea that the ideational realm of meanings, ideas, and discourse is intertwined with material reality in that it is simultaneously constituted by it and constitutive of it. This implies that, even though ontologically material phenomena can have an existence of their own, epistemologically they cannot be separated from the meanings and ideas we invest into them. One cannot conceive of political and social reality outside of the structures of meaning and discourses within which it is embedded and which it constantly reproduces. The object of this dissertation therefore has been the civil society assistance discourse as it is enacted through interactions between American donors and Ukrainian recipients of assistance since the end of the Cold War.

There are different ways to analyze discourse, depending on the practical and theoretical aims of the research. In this dissertation I was particularly interested in the stability and change of civil society assistance discourse across the different contexts in which it is enacted. To these ends the Bakhtinian model of dialogical discourse analysis provided an ideal framework. The notion of stability is defined through the Bakhtinian notion of centripetal forces that keep together a "unitary language" or a discourse. Here a discourse is defined as a system of meaning that constitutes a coherent idea or definition of what can be meaningfully said and done about a certain issue. Centripetal forces are embedded in core discursive centers – notions that form a set of reference points from which one makes sense of the world and of

[516] Nye, *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*.

the particular social and political phenomena in question. In the civil society assistance discourse, as I elaborate below, such discursive centers are "capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability". Discursive centers are mutually re-enforcing, and they all add up to the common core idea or rationale supported by the discourse. This means that discursive centers work to preclude alternative interpretations and explanations of phenomena; they have an inherent authoritative claim to unity and universality within the discourse.

The centripetal forces of the assistance discourse organize assistance, its goals, and its procedures around several related ideas about why and how different countries and their civil societies are to be assisted. Operating simultaneously with these centripetal forces, centrifugal forces act to disrupt the unity and coherence of a discourse. They bring in openings - alternative meanings and interpretations or new concepts that transform the discourse from within. Openings are as important for any discourse as discursive centers, because they introduce a degree of flexibility into the "unitary language" that enables its existence across different (and constantly changing) cultural and linguistic contexts. Such flexibility is an "in-built" mechanism that facilitates acceptance and perpetuation of a particular discourse and, thus, enhances its power on the whole. However, openings can also expose the limits of a particular discourse. Thus, the focus on the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces has allowed me to account not only for the hegemony and structuring power of the civil society assistance discourse but also for the limits to this hegemony and transformations in its core meanings.

In order to understand how exactly the centripetal and the centrifugal forces interact, I have drawn on another Bakhtinian notion: dialogicality or dialogism (*dialogichnost'*). Dialogicality implies that the relationship between the centripetal and centrifugal forces and the discursive phenomena that they co-create is not static. Different discursive centers as well as the discourse as a whole are constantly (re)enacted within various sites of interaction. Within each moment of (re)enactment certain discursive centers can lose their prominence for the discourse, change meaning and/or acquire additional notions that define them, or be rejected.

In the case of USAID civil society assistance to Ukraine I have identified three core sites of interaction in which such (re)enactments take place: Washington DC, Kiev, and local NGOs. Within each of these sites of interaction I have analyzed the civil society assistance discourse in three steps. First, I have identified the central ideas and the boundaries of the discourse of assistance. I have argued that the particular circumstances of the origin of the civil society assistance discourse determined its core notions that relate to the idea of "teaching and expertise transfer" conceived in a highly technical fashion. Second, I have explored how these ideas translated into the specific case of assistance to support civil society. I have identified three core discursive centers that define the civil society assistance discourse at all three levels of interaction. The particular combination of three core centers of "capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability" is not accidental and is directly determined by

the nature of the assistance discourse – all three centers sustain a technical and deliberately depoliticized meaning of assistance. They make it possible for assistance efforts to act quickly towards short-term goals and at the same time to maintain the position of superior knowledge and expertise. Third, by focusing on women's and gender issues, I have considered in greater detail the meanings of "empowerment" through civil society. The meaning of "empowerment" becomes substantially transformed across the three different sites of interaction, and thus an opening in the civil society assistance discourse is created.

Below I first present the main findings of the analysis and then elaborate on the social and political implications of the discursive phenomena and processes I discovered and on how they relate to the existing academic research in the field.

7.2. The Findings: Unpacking the Civil Society Assistance Discourse

Following my three-sited dialogical research model I have identified core discursive centers and accounted for transformations in their meanings in each of the sites. Table 2 summarizes these findings. Overall, Washington DC is the site in which the civil society assistance discourse is created and defined; it is characterized by its monological and unitary nature. In contrast, interactions in Kiev and at local NGOs represent the actual encounters between the assistance discourse and "local" ones. These two sites demonstrate substantial adaptations and departures from the "original" meanings of civil society assistance. However, these adaptations are still defined in terms of "assistance" rather than in terms of other, local notions. The discussion below is aimed at explicating in more detail the dynamic across the three sites of interaction.

Table 2:
Core notions of civil society assistance discourse at three levels of abstraction in three sites of interaction

	Washington	**Kiev**	**NGO**
Assistance	*What does it mean to assist?* **"teaching" and expertise transfer**: occurs in a top-down manner from US(AID) to recipients; the goals of "assistance" are conditioned by the idea of "transition" as a temporary period of change with clearly established goals and content; characterized by short-term perspectives and anticipation of a "phase out"; the discourse is kept "empty"	*What does it mean to mediate assistance?* **"teaching" and expertise transfer**: is mediated through the notion of "world/ international community", which connects Ukrainian professional elites to their American assistance partners; this "community" is not shared by the two sides in the same way: the boundaries of knowledge and expertise maintain divisions between teachers and students	*What does it mean to be assisted?* **"teaching" and expertise transfer**: the opposition between the imaginary "West" and the legacies of Soviet past (*sovok*) facilitates a certain degree of acceptance of assistance locally
Civil society	*What does it mean to promote civil society through assistance?* "**capacity building**": promoting particular organizational forms (NGOs); "**empowerment**": providing access to information and psychological training to help people face "social transition issues" and overcome the "wrong" Soviet mentality; "**sustainability**": through professionalization, considered achieved when NGOs can perform assistance tasks on their own	*What does it mean to mediate between civil society and assistance?* "**capacity building**": through socialization of Ukrainian professional elites into the assistance rules and procedures; "**empowerment**": the "wrong mentality" idea and the role of assistance is questioned; "**sustainability**": the debate on what organizational forms and activities will survive beyond assistance is extended to include local perspectives	*What does it mean to be(come) an NGO?* "**capacity building**": embedded in "trainings" that lead to formalization and professionalization of NGOs and to fragmentation and competitiveness of the sector as a whole; "**empowerment**": instrumentalized for the short-term survival goals of individual NGOs; "**sustainability**": largely perceived in contradiction to assistance, something that is possible "despite of" rather than "thanks to" assistance

Gender women's issues	*What does it mean to empower women?* "**women as a target group**": defined as generally underprivileged and marginalized and subjected to "threats"; rooted in the discourse on "women in development"; "**women's empowerment**": said to take place through provision of women-specific spaces, of which the NGO sector is the most common one; "**gender**": is present but does not form a discursive center	*What does it mean to empower women?* "**women as a target group**": (and a related discursive center of "women as victims") questioned; alternative target groups suggested; "**women's empowerment**": seen as attainable through fighting gender misbalance and inequality rather than discrimination of women; "**gender**": often mobilized to phrase this position in "assistance"-friendly language and reinforced by the notion of "professionalism"	*What does it mean to empower women?* "**women as a target group**": transformed by 1) being dismissed as not having a real-life basis and pluralized by showing the multiple backgrounds of women; 2) altogether substituted by other discursive centers that focus on a specific issue rather than a target group; **"women's empowerment":** defined through rejecting the idea of women's specificity; **"gender"** is not prominent at this site

7.2.1. What does "assistance" mean?

Any discourse is organized around one or several core ideas that define its nature, purpose, and normative basis. The assistance discourse I have examined is organized around the core idea of teaching and expertise transfer. This is the "face" of assistance that is often overlooked by institutionalist or materialist accounts of assistance as a transfer of material resources. The prevalence of the idea of teaching and knowledge transfer means that interactions between providers, mediators, and recipients of assistance are based on a clear division of roles between the side that holds the knowledge and expertise and the side that is to be taught. This teaching is top-down and unidirectional because it is believed that those who are taught have no knowledge to contribute to the exchange. The discourse of assistance as teaching is supported by several discursive centers that define the space for and the participants in the interaction.

The core ideas of the assistance discourse are a combination of new and old themes. The old theme helps legitimize the discourse by building on widely accepted and well-known ideas, whereas the new theme helps position the discourse as an up-to-date response to significant political changes. In Washington DC it is extensively emphasized that the

organizational history of aid or assistance extends beyond the case of civil society assistance to the former Soviet Union and to Ukraine more specifically. By means of this reference to a larger historical and geographic context, USAID is positioned not only as the source of knowledge or the teacher in this particular interaction but also as the side that has had long-term teaching experience across different time periods and contexts. Frequent references to the Marshall Plan reconstruction effort are an example of this legitimating discursive move. An organizational teleology is evoked as a historical basis for defining assistance in terms of teaching and for identifying USAID as the legitimate teacher.

The emergence of "assistance" was driven by ideas of urgency, novelty, and difference from "aid". As a consequence, ideas about who should be providing "assistance" to whom and why it was important were (re)defined and supported by legislative and institutional measures, such as the SEED and FSA Acts and the new regional bureaus within the US Department of State and USAID. The assistance discourse goes to great lengths to explain the unprecedented nature of the political, social, and economic developments taking place in the former socialist countries, all of which go by the newly coined term of "transition". The rationale for assisting the new "region" was constructed in terms of teaching and expertise transfer from the democratic and economically developed "West" to the formerly Soviet "East", which was believed to be capable of catching up with the "West" within a relatively short timeframe. However, the urgency with which the assistance discourse emerged also came at the expense of defining how exactly assistance should take place. Being conceived as a short-term effort, "assistance" also had few discursive mechanisms at its disposal that would enable some learning from the recipients of "assistance" or other innovative changes within it. In other words, defining "assistance" as a quick transfer of expertise meant that questions of how it could become relevant for the local context were not only overlooked at the initial stage but were altogether excluded from the discussion. Given the lack of knowledge about the new "region" of assistance, the combination of urgency with lack of focus came at a social and political cost that I discuss in more detail below. Overall, "assistance" can be understood as a powerful discursive frame with little specific content, whose "emptiness" was of a deliberate rather than accidental nature.

These processes of constructing the assistance discourse are not entirely confined to the site of its origin; instead, the discourse is constantly transformed and adapted across different sites of its (re)enactment. In Kiev the discourse of assistance as teaching is transformed to accommodate the higher heterogeneity of actors involved in designing and implementing assistance. In addition to American experts working at the USAID Mission in Kiev, there are also their Ukrainian colleagues (even though they mostly hold lower ranking positions), different implementing partner NGOs, both American and Ukrainian, and women's NGOs that receive assistance. In other words, Kiev is a meeting point between those who provide assistance as teaching and those who receive it. It is a site of interaction that is more "dialogical" by nature, to use a Bakhtinian term. In Kiev the discourse of assistance as teaching is complemented by the discursive center of the "international/world

community". Clearly, this center evokes the idea of a more inclusive and egalitarian framework for interaction. While still being engaged in the "teaching", the mediators of assistance from the West and from Ukraine reinvent it as a shared endeavor. Yet the meaning of the "international/world community" is not exactly the same for the two sides. The Westerners perceive it as a chance to reinvent themselves as experts on a global scale: The "world/ international community" is themselves, and they constitute it through their interactions with multiple local sites of assistance around the world. Mediating assistance to different regions of the world, as became possible after the end of Cold War, is a format that enables such a reinvention. The Ukrainians, on the other hand, see the "international/world community" as a space from which they have been excluded. However, the interaction with the Westerners and the acquisition of Western expertise are believed to be key for entering that space and being recognized there.

On the level of local NGOs, the interaction with Westerners is less direct; in fact in certain places it hardly exists, even today. Although a similar process of alignment of the "new" with the "old" occurs, these interactions take place more on the level of the "imaginary". The civil society assistance discourse is strengthened by its convergence with a home-grown discourse that defines the "West" as an ideal to be aspired to and the Soviet legacy (*sovok*) as a constraint to be overcome. The discursive center of *sovok* serves as a kind of a contrast space: Since its rejection is widely perceived as necessary, the new alternative embodied in the discursive center of the "West" is legitimized. In other words, it helps naturalize the idea of learning from the "West". Thus, in both sites of interaction – in Kiev and within local NGOs – the discourse of assistance as teaching remains intact through adaptations to the locally relevant notions that take place in the course of interactions in these sites.

Overall, the assistance discourse has a highly prescriptive character: It promotes particular organizational forms and procedures in a top-down manner through its thematic priorities, assistance procedures, eligibility criteria, and timeframes. Having defined themselves from the position of "the ones in the know" and the teachers, USAID and its American partners reserve for themselves the space to define the content and the format of teaching. In order to explore these features further and to identify the mechanisms that sustain them I have looked into the specific case of civil society assistance.

7.2.2. What does it mean to assist civil society?

In the area of civil society assistance, teaching is aimed at promoting the growth of specific organizational forms, namely non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are socialized into procedures of assistance. In the course of this socialization, the form(at) of NGOs is overemphasized at the expense of the content and purpose of NGO activities. The assistance discourse defines the interaction between the donor and the NGO as a transfer of expertise based on top-down technical trainings. This formalistic and technicalized character of civil society assistance is sustained through the discursive centers of "capacity building" and

"sustainability". Both define civil society building in terms of tools and skills that are necessary to sustain the assistance industry or to create organizational structures that will be capable of replacing it should the assistance institutions themselves, such as for example the USAID Mission in Kiev, withdraw from the country. The relevance of NGOs for the local context is not the key concern of assistance; instead, the main goal is to reproduce structures that are compatible with the assistance itself. Such a bias in the civil society assistance discourse leads to the broad-scale creation of what I call "professionals without a profession". In a way that is similar to training a doctor on how to maintain state-of-the-art equipment without teaching her how to treat people, foreign assistance facilitates the training of thousands of NGO specialists without making a connection between their new skills and the democratic purposes of civil society.

To understand this idea of teaching a comparison with corporate trainings is useful. Namely, the assistance industry can be seen as offering corporate trainings to select candidates that allow the latter to pursue their careers within the industry, thus ensuring the proper skill acquisition of the industry's employees and its improved operation in the country in question. To a certain degree, of course, the personal gains acquired through such trainings contribute to the overall well-being of the society in question, and some of the transferred skills are made useful in other spheres. However, even if there is a certain degree of spill-over into the society as a whole, it does not translate into building a civil society. Essentially, the assistance discourse does not function in a way that would provide for anything but running the assistance industry itself. In terms of the content and format of teaching, the difference between assistance trainings and sustainable knowledge creation is similar to that between corporate trainings and university education. Whereas the former is aimed at training employees in the skills the company needs them to apply, the latter exists to give people access to the knowledge they want to acquire in accordance with their personal vision and idea(l)s.

The discursive center of "empowerment" defined in terms of changing individual "mentality" emerged as a means to respond to the longer-term concerns and structural problems in Ukraine while at the same time preserving the technical nature of "assistance" and its core rational of "teaching and expertise transfer". This means that even though there is nothing wrong with the idea of individual "empowerment" per se, its employment within the assistance discourse resulted in the further empowerment of assistance rather than of Ukrainian civil society.

The interactions in Kiev are of a more dialogical nature because Ukrainian mediators of assistance open up all three discursive centers – "capacity building", "empowerment", and "sustainability" – in order to create space for themselves and their own agency. However, none of these transformations is aimed at subverting assistance altogether. Instead, these adaptations make it more viable locally. "Capacity building" is redefined through the notion of "professionalism". Ukrainian "assistance professionals" argue that it is assistance itself that has to be transformed so that they could be empowered through improved "professionalism". In addition, "sustainability" is defined as a successful take-over of assistance by Ukrainian

professional elites. However, the standard of "professionalism" remains the one that is set by Western colleagues. Altogether, the discursive transformations of the conception of civil society in Kiev are all undertaken within the framework of the civil society assistance discourse and do not open it up to alternative conceptions. In fact, a certain convergence of interests seems to develop between the "Westerners" and the Ukrainians on making the NGO sector that developed as a result of assistance a sustainable socially and politically relevant structure.

On the local level, the most important difference is the absence of such a commitment to the NGO sector as a whole. The idea of "capacity building" that is aimed at increasing "professionalism" is here redefined in private individualist terms – acquiring professional skills is important for one's individual economic success. The relevance of these skills is determined with a reference to local demand on the labor market rather than to sustaining the NGO sector. In other words, NGO activists invest time and effort into building up expertise and skills that they could also market elsewhere rather than into developing their NGOs. A tight financial dependence on assistance and the constant threat of its withdrawal lead to conflicting interpretations of the discursive center of "sustainability". For what is sustainable for assistance is not sustainable outside of it. While, for example, assistance invests in the creation of NGO resource centers as future upholders of assistance and thus organizations with long-term prospects, the Ukrainians working at those NGOs define them as unsustainable, short-term administrative arrangements that will have to be changed once the assistance "is over". Locally, "sustainability" is realized through the privatization of the tools and skills acquired through NGOs and their instrumentalization towards increasing individual gains.

Altogether, it is clear that a set of very particular discursive centers that define what civil society is about and how it should function remains intact across all three sites of interaction. This means that no alternative meanings of civil society are enacted and manifested in alternative organizational forms and practices. The transformations in meanings of those particular discursive centers enable their functioning in different sites and, thus, strengthen the civil society assistance discourse as a whole rather than contest it. In order to explore in more detail how these discursive mechanisms impact on the activities and agendas of Ukrainian NGOs, I have investigated the programs that are implemented through women's NGOs.

7.2.3. What does it mean to empower women?

Assistance has introduced many new concepts, most of which are not fully accepted within the NGO community and even less so outside of it; such is also the case with the concepts that define women's and gender issues. As I have discussed in chapters four to six, the discourse on gender and women's issues is kept together by two core discursive centers – "women as a target group" and "women's empowerment". I have shown that, to a certain extent, the term "gender" is present in Washington DC; interestingly, it is also mobilized by

women's NGOs in Kiev to oppose the ideas associated with viewing "women as a target group". However, it has very little presence on the ground.

In Washington DC – largely due to the power of the "women in development" discourse – the notion of "women as a target group" defines women as "victims" and "oppressed" and is based on the idea that women are underprivileged, subjugated, and marginalized on the basis of their gender. They can therefore be singled out as a group that needs specific intervention and is comparable to powerless and marginalized minorities. In Kiev, the discursive center of "gender" is mobilized to contest this discursive center and is used to communicate a concern with problems that men and women both face as a result of gendered divisions and stereotypes that exist in society. Here, women's issues are not seen as a result of the existence of females but as arising from a human-made misbalance between men and women. The solution is therefore to eliminate the socio-economic causes of such misbalance. In this sense, "gender" represents a concern with gendered division and inequality rather than with the oppression and subjugation of women. The fact that "gender" is an imported "Western" concept is important because, as Ukrainian women argue, it allows them to question the discourse of "assistance" on its own terms and with the help of a concept that donors brought to Ukraine themselves.

Within local NGOs (unlike big NGOs in Kiev) the discursive center of "gender" is not widely used; it remains a specialized term with no equivalent either in Russian or in Ukrainian. Here, the discursive center of "women as a target group" is contested by, first, questioning the existence and nature of this target group and, second, by redefining the meaning of "women's empowerment". Both in Kiev and locally, Ukrainian women express discontent with the Washington-driven meanings of "women as a target group". They contest implicit ideas that all women lack self-confidence, are potentially "at risk", in a perpetual psychological "crisis", exposed to domestic violence, and incapable of ensuring their economic independence. The shared discontent over these representations has led to redefining the notion of "women as a target group". More tailored and focused definitions of target groups have been brought forward; in addition, an emphasis has been introduced on other victims of domestic and transnational threats, for example male migrants or homeless children, and on other forms of exploitation as opposed to sexual exploitation exclusively. At local NGOs women invest considerable effort into negotiating more agency for women because they themselves feel threatened and offended by the meaning of "women as a target group" that is embedded in Washington programs.

Striking is also the difference in ideas across sites about what the real obstacles are that women face when they want to change their economic situations either through new employment or by starting their own businesses. While in Kiev it is argued, notably by Winrock International, that women face psychological problems, such as a lack of self-confidence, that prevent them from changing their economic situations, local NGOs are mostly focused on increasing practical skills of women and in general argue that women and men face similar structural problems when they try to start a business, especially for the first

time. Such an emphasis on the absence of differences between men and women in the world of business can be understood as a way to stress that women are just as "good" as men and thus to empower them in this way.

New meanings and discursive centers that arise as a result of such transformations can sometimes travel between (related) sites of interaction. The evolution of the discursive center of "women as a target group" in the context of the issue of trafficking is exemplary of the learning that takes place within the assistance discourse. New meanings have been incorporated into the most recent Anti-Trafficking Initiative implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This is a good example of how meanings can be transformed in a particular site of interaction in politically significant ways.

7.3. Social and Political Effects of the Civil Society Assistance Discourse

The dominance of the civil society assistance discourse as described above has significant implications for social and political developments in Ukraine for two reasons: Not only does assistance fall short of the proclaimed goal of democracy-building, it also impedes the development of civil society because the assistance discourse and practice introduce and help institutionalize undemocratic practices or are utilized towards undemocratic ends. I argue that this latter effect (even if unintended) is endogenous to the assistance discourse itself rather than a result of processes external to it.

The assistance discourse is focused upon itself and self-sufficient in the sense that its goals and activities are aimed at sustaining its own rationale for existence. Defining assistance in terms of teaching implies that USAID is in a position to offer knowledge of value for the recipients. This means that if either this position of the teacher or the content of what is being taught are questioned, assistance loses its rationale. The transformations within the discourse that I have described keep intact the core idea of teaching, as questioning this core idea would dissolve the discourse as a whole. This means that the assistance discourse purposefully excludes a whole range of alternative possibilities, such as building on local knowledge and expertise, granting the primary agency to local actors, establishing a two-way dialogue, and including a larger range of voices. In practical terms, assistance supports one particular type of local actors that are involved in an unequal relationship of dependency with the assistance agency. Altogether, assistance is preoccupied with justifying its presence in the assistance context, and therefore the activities it supports are primarily concerned with ensuring its own continuity and survival. Therefore, the sort of civil society it aims at building is an organizational structure designed to ensure the "sustainability" of assistance itself and its privileged position within the new governance of the former Soviet Union.

Another feature of the civil society assistance discourse that prevents substantive transformation of the underlying "teaching" relationship is its reliance on short-term frames of reference. This relationship has a problematic starting point, namely the fact that the actors who are doing the teaching are outsiders. Their strength – material and political independence

from local power struggles and patterns of resource distribution – is also their weakness. Having no stake in local struggles, outsiders are also having a more difficult time proving their commitment, which is key to any attempts to reach a common understanding on the best possible course of action. By adopting the discourse of short-term technical intervention, USAID excludes possibilities for transforming the terms of the dialogue it has with the local civil society. This in turn undermines the effort of assisting civil society altogether, because heralding ideas of civil society comes with a responsibility for the ways in which these ideas are communicated.

Defining assistance as a transfer of "technical" expertise allows USAID to defend itself against two potentially problematic accusations: of political partisanship and of disrespect for local choices. In other words, it allows USAID to say that it is not supporting particular organizations but "civil society" in general and that it remains up to the local civic leaders to determine how the newly acquired technical expertise could become beneficial for the development of their organizations specifically and of civil society in general. However, I show that this "strategy" engenders opposite effects because the technical expertise USAID transmits presupposes the development of particular types of civic organizations. It also predefines a range of activities that these organizations can be performing.

As I have discussed above, the idea of "empowerment" – contrary to what one might infer from the label – does not help overcome these shortcomings of assistance. The discursive center of "empowerment" suggests a change of individual attitudes and values to ones that are more democratic, egalitarian, and reciprocal; it is said to be about building trust in oneself, the others, and in new institutions. Yet, civil society assistance projects aimed at "empowerment" are hierarchical, bureaucratic, competitive, and distrustful towards both the assistance world itself and the recipients of assistance. This irony of "empowerment" does not escape those Ukrainians who are acquainted with assistance. In the words of one of the local civic leaders: "Few foreigners are able to demonstrate, by their words and actions, that their efforts […] are not directed more toward securing privileges for themselves than to insuring fair competition, the rule of law, and security for everyone."[517] Here the point is not to blame the foreigners for being self-interested and definitely not to overlook those partnerships between the locals and the Westerners that have been able to establish a relationship based on trust. Instead, I would like to emphasize that the terms of the dialogue matter as much as its proclaimed goals. Democracy cannot be built through undemocratic practices, especially not when it concerns civil society, an institutional field whose entire rationale for existence is predicated on democratic participation.

The issue of trust is also crucial on the institutional level. As I have shown in chapter five by analyzing the notion of the "new wrong mentality", many Ukrainians are concerned with the fact that "assistance" is supportive of the corrupt institutional practices that it is supposed to help overcome. The practices of assistance on the ground are far less different

[517] David Usupashvili, "NGO Lessons from Georgia: Failed Expectations, New Cooperation," *Give & Take: A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia* 4, no. 4: Winter (2002): p.10.

from those that dominate local "ways" than its practitioners would like to admit. Its reliance on favors and closed networks of "professionals", its non-meritocratic distribution of material resources, and sometimes even unlawful practices, such as tax evasion, are all signs of its convergence with local ways to "get things done". I suggest that this is a troublesome tendency rather than a temporary shortcoming because the donors are building the capacity of local institutions with one hand and are undermining it with the other. They demand transparency and accountability from the local institutions, while their own actions reveal distrust in those institutions. Moreover, these practices make it clear that the donors' own transparency and accountability are not directed towards the people of the country they assist.

The issue of "sustainability" is also problematic, and the sustainability of civil society organizations is in fact seriously undermined by assistance despite its claims to the contrary. Due to the impact of the civil society assistance discourse, civil society in Ukraine is equated with a professionalized NGO sector that provides mostly administrative services either to foreign donors or to other actors, such as local authorities or, more recently, private organizations. As such, this sector is a source of relatively stable and well-paid employment in the capital of Ukraine. However, in other parts of Ukraine, especially small cities, such services face very little demand and, thus, NGOs are perceived as temporary and unsustainable. This is not true for every NGO, because their chances of survival also depend on how well their leaders manage to fit into the local context. Some NGOs represent success stories of establishing a good niche for themselves and finding alternative resources. Altogether, however, the commitment of civic activists to the NGO sector as a whole is low. Many NGO leaders choose to channel the resources and human capital they have acquired through their NGOs towards developing various forms of individual entrepreneurship, thus privatizing the resources they acquired at public expense. Therefore, these discursive features of assistance stand in the way of building a civil society that would be vibrant and committed to democracy building in Ukraine.

One could argue that, shortsighted as it seems, such an approach to civil society assistance does not cause any immediate harm to the societies that receive assistance: Even though the assistance practice falls short of the proclaimed goal of democracy-building, it does not prevent democracy from thriving. However, the dominance of the civil society assistance discourse that I have discovered leads me to conclude the opposite. This assistance discourse and practice should not be considered as yet another approach co-existing in some kind of peaceful heteroglossia with a few other alternative visions, each having their say in Ukrainian political and social life. The relative dominance that the civil society assistance discourse has gained in Ukraine has enabled it to colonize the larger discursive space of democratic transition and has put it in a position to steer the debate and the political practice pertaining to civil society and democracy-building. Coming back to the observation discussed in the beginning of this dissertation, the strange subculture of "public organizations" (*obshchestvennye organizatsii*) has become synonymous with civil society as a whole, both in the eyes of its members as well as in the public perception. This means that the power of the assistance

discourse lies in the definition and institutionalization of a particular idea about what civil society is and how it should operate. To use the discourse analytical vocabulary that I have introduced in chapter three, the assistance discourse creates conditions of possibility for a particular form of civil society, and thus denies them to other possible forms of civic participation.

Politically, the dominance of the civil society assistance discourse is problematic because of its depoliticizing effect on the Ukrainian society. It is depoliticizing because it substitutes the potentially powerful political concept of civil society with a purely technical set of tools. As I have discussed in chapter one, ideas about civil society as a democratic guarantor in the Eastern European intellectual tradition precede assistance to civil society by a few decades. In fact, some Eastern European thinkers went to great lengths discussing what exactly ensures the democratic role of civil society. Different thinkers contended that civil society should be a process of refining, sharing, and upholding democratic values. They saw the purpose of civil society in (re)creating and constantly developing a democratic public based on mutual trust and respect. Many of them were particularly suspicious of treating civil society as an end goal of social and political transformation. The lesson one learns from this scholarship is that the discussion of what civil society is and should be has to come before and to accompany any discussion of which technical tools are therefore important. Assistance to civil society after the collapse of socialism, however, took a very different course. One of the biggest substantive problems of this assistance is that it not only reversed this sequence: It effectively precluded a discussion of substantive and normative questions regarding the meaning and role of civil society by developing a powerful technical civil society assistance discourse. By focusing exclusively on the pre-defined goals of "transition", it overlooked the local ideas laid out above and focused instead on introducing a set of technical tools that it deemed appropriate given its experience at home as well as in other parts of the world. Thus, despite proclaiming a democratic goal, it operated in what might be called an imperialistic fashion.

In this way, the dominance of the civil society assistance discourse as I have described it also comes at the expense of other, home-grown meanings of civil society. Whether or not certain local ideas of civil society will have their renaissance in the future remains to be seen. However, as I have shown with the help of dialogical discourse analysis, the social and political developments in Ukraine cannot be described as a simple antagonism between indigenous and externally imposed ideas and practices. Rather, they are constituted by the interaction between assistance and local civic actors, and the resulting civil society represents a "shared" creation rather than the victory of a particular imposed political project.

The fact that the concept and the institutions of civil society in Ukraine are depoliticized through assistance discourse and practice not only means that little or no influence is granted to Eastern European ideas about the democratic role of civil society. I argue that this depoliticization created a more sinister effect: It has actually enabled the use of civil society concepts and practices in ways that do not relate to democracy building or even

lead to undemocratic political practices. Having been turned into a set of tools, "civil society" is utilized to serve various political interests that are not necessarily rooted in democratic values. This is the case with the assistance industry itself that prioritizes its own "sustainability" over that of the civil society it claims to build. This is also the case with local political elites who have learnt how to utilize such organizational forms as resource centers, "think tanks", and other types of NGOs in order to exert political influence and consolidate resources. Perhaps one of the most ironic examples is the recent initiative of the former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, who has founded *Blagodiina Organizatsiia Prezidentskyi Fond Leonida Kuchmy Ukraina* (Presidential Charity Fund of Leonid Kuchma "Ukraine"), an NGO aimed at supporting social and educational projects as well as providing independent analytical expertise. Even though the former president is infamous for endorsing corrupt and undemocratic practices, his choice to join the world of civic organizations in Ukraine did not seem controversial either to Ukrainians or to foreign donors. Examples such as this one show that at this point the nature of assistance discourse and practice cannot be attributed exclusively to foreign donors: Instead, they have been appropriated by a variety of local actors. This is reason to conclude that the effects of assistance I have described are of a longer-term nature and may indeed impact on Ukrainian politics beyond the "phase out" of assistance. Thus, it seems that a distorted kind of "sustainability" of civil society activity has indeed been achieved. Its relationship with the goals of democratization is, however, precarious at best.

7.4. Revisiting Some Questions

7.4.1. Assistance

As I have shown in the previous chapters, despite the recent growth of the literature on the subject of civil society assistance, there are several puzzles that remain unpacked; let me revisit them here. Scholars who have had a more direct research experience with different sites of assistance have skillfully exposed the inherent tensions and contradictions in civil society assistance.[518] There is a vast body of literature available that shows the contradictions in how donors operate and draws attention to a whole range of (un)intended consequences that they produce in recipient societies. Having exposed the problems, however, this literature tells us little about how it is possible that these are established practices rather than one-time failures. This led me to raise the following provocative questions: Are the donors blind or do they just not care; are the locals wicked or just plain stupid; and how is it that both sides continue doing what they are doing?

[518] Carothers and Ottaway, eds., *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion,* Hann, ed., *Postsocialism: Ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia,* Hann and Dunn, eds., *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models,* Mendelson and Glenn, eds., *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe.*

The employment of the Bakhtinian model of dialogical discourse analysis enabled me to tackle this question. Seeing assistance in dialogical terms makes it possible to account for transformation, adaptation, and eventual acceptance of the core idea of the assistance discourse across different sites in which it is enacted. The discourse of "assistance" as "teaching and expertise transfer" is originally defined in Washington DC through notions such as "transition" that imply short-term technical intervention. The same discourse is mediated in Kiev through the notion of an "international/ world community" that connects the external "experts" with the Ukrainian professional elite. Within local NGOs, despite the evident distance between the ideas set forth in Washington DC and those articulated by local communities, the discourse of assistance as "teaching" is sustained by its convergence with home-grown notions, such as the opposition between the "West" and *sovok*. A relationship is developed between the assistance discourse and local ideas about becoming like the "West" that gives the assistance discourse a particular meaning locally. In other words, in each site of interaction the same assistance discourse continues to make sense, although its meaning becomes substantively different. This helps us understand why the idea of civil society embodied within a local NGO comes to mean something quite different from the ideas that were initially proclaimed in Washington DC, and yet the overall assistance discourse remains stable.

The assistance discourse, therefore, should not be seen as hegemony imposed from the outside. Even though its origin is external to Ukraine, its existence is enabled through and dependent upon interactions between Americans and Ukrainians. Assistance would not have become a well-established political practice if it had remained an idea of American policy-makers. What makes assistance politically significant is its enactment through dialogue and exchange between different actors. The discourse of assistance is powerful precisely because very different actors adhere to it, and even if they choose to do something that contradicts the original ideas from Washington DC, they make sense of their activities in terms of "assistance" as laid out above and not in terms of other notions.

Having identified the contradictions and the effects of assistance some scholars argue that the problem with assistance is not the idea itself but the way it is put to practice.[519] However, I show that analytical separation between ideas and their enactment inhibits rather than furthers our understanding of the workings of assistance. By exposing the technicalization of the assistance discourse that occurs through notions of "expertise transfer", "capacity building", and "sustainability" I have shown how certain ideas constitute certain practices and preclude others. I have shown how thinking in terms of "capacity building" led to the substitution of the idea of supporting civil society with that of transferring technical tools. I have further cautioned that such substitution actually contradicts the idea of civil society support because one cannot first "build capacity" and then hope it would yield

[519] Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The learning curve,* Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations,* Patrice McMahon, "Building Civil Society in East Central Europe: The Effect of American Non-governmental Organizations on Women's Groups," *Democratization* 8, no. 2 (2001).

certain democratic effects by itself. Quite on the contrary, envisioning the desired democratic effects is the precondition for choosing an appropriate set of "capacity building" tools.

The recent wave of "colorful" revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine presents insightful examples. In all three cases civic protests and acts of non-violent civic disobedience were facilitated by activities of "professional revolutionaries" and of highly sophisticated think tanks and expert groups. Professionally trained youth groups such as *Otpor* in Serbia and *Pora* in Ukraine formed the avant-garde of civic protests, worked to mobilize the population, and "branded" the symbols and slogans for the revolution. In addition, exit polling conducted as part of the "parallel vote tabulation" by election monitoring groups mostly trained and funded by the US government through its democracy programs proved vital for mobilizing opposition against fraud and vote-rigging. These and other technical tools were important for the success of the respective revolutions. However, they should not be seen as the recipe for their success. Although the same trainings and technical programs were implemented in Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asian countries, the outcomes of their respective elections turned out very different. Russia presents an even more puzzling case: The revolutionary "cookbook" and the tools it offers are appropriated by both pro-Putin regime and opposition supporters. The example of Russia clearly shows that by itself "technical expertise" on creating democratic change can yield both democratic and undemocratic effects. If assistance is about "expertise transfer", one cannot straightforwardly assume an inherent democratic effect of that expertise.

7.4.2. Civil Society

American aid and assistance policy-makers have often been accused of ethnocentrism and cultural insensitivity in that they tend to impose their particular normative and practical ideas of civil society on other parts of the world. The analysis presented in this dissertation adds a new aspect to that story. Namely, it shows that, although some of the initial premises of civil society assistance are specifically American, the actual civil society that develops as a result of multi-sited interactions between Americans and Ukrainians is more complex than just a normative and empirical replica of an American model. The civil society that is developing in Ukraine is a result of interaction between American and local ideas not only about civil society as such but also about the common good as well as the meaning of the public and the private realms and of the position of the individual vis-à-vis both. The discussion in chapters one and two points to the dynamism and change in (re)configurations of the private and public during and after the collapse of the Soviet Block and the complex transformations of identities and activities that go with it. Important divergences between the (formerly) Soviet countries as well as between pre- and post- 1989 developments point to the fact that, even before we introduce the issue of foreign assistance to civil society into the discussion, the question of what kind of civil society there is and should be is far from straightforward and lends no simple answer.

In fact, I point out the limits of research that portrays the development of civil society in the former Soviet Union as a tension between "indigenous" and "externally supported" civic groups.[520] This dichotomy may be useful if one wants to measure whether or not there is a difference between the groups that are supported from the West and those that are not. However, I argue that once the agreement that assistance matters is reached, dichotomizing the "indigenous" and the "external" prevents one from seeing the full picture. More specifically, I emphasize that civil society is constituted through the interaction between Ukrainians and Americans. From the perspective of dialogical discourse analysis, the terms of the dialogue between the two sides are constitutive of the civil society that is created through such dialogue. This means that the effect of assistance as a whole goes beyond the effects of operations of each individual actor. I have shown that assistance defines "capacity building" as creating civic organizations that fit the organizational model defined by the donor and their "sustainability" as the ability to perform the tasks rendered important by the donor. Moreover, the assistance discourse sees "empowerment" as a way to overcome the presumed psychological deficiency of Ukrainians. Altogether, these discursive centers define the dialogue between Americans and Ukrainians in terms of unequal power relations and poor commitment to long-term development. Looking at the relationship between the "indigenous" and the "external" in this way has led me to conclude that the problematic nature of "assistance" lies not in the fact that an externally defined notion of civil society is being imposed on the local context but in the way in which "assistance" constitutes the relationship between Americans and Ukrainians. In other words, civil society assistance is not to be remedied by finding a better notion of civil society but by transforming the core principles of assistance itself.

7.4.3. Gender and Women's Issues

The analysis of gender and women's issues in the civil society assistance discourse points to the complexities of defining a particular (politically significant) issue in different contexts. This leads to a related argument that I put forward vis-à-vis the literature on transnational/ global civil society, which defines civil society as composed of "moral entrepreneurs" who act transnationally to deal with social issues and to mobilize resources for those on the margins of global politics.[521] Without necessarily questioning the sincerity of those particular actors on the transnational scene, it is important to keep the agenda of these actors, on the one hand, and the conceptual apparatus for scholarly analysis, on the other hand, analytically separate. It is as important to study, for example, the discourse on the "empowerment of women" as it is to study the actual practical achievements of such activities. Since ideas are treated as a strategically mobilized tool by the civil society actors, it is important to analyze the tool itself

[520] Henderson, *Building Democracy in Contemporary Russia: Western Support for Grassroots Organizations,* Hrycak, "From Mothers' Rights to Equal Rights: Post-Soviet Grassroots Women's Associations."
[521] Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics,* Sperling, Ferree, and Risman, "Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women's Activism."

and the implications of its usage in different contexts, rather than just the success or failure of its employment.

As I have shown with the help of dialogical discourse analysis, the notion of "women as a target group" and the related notion of "women's empowerment" are powerful discursive centers strongly institutionalized in policy circles in Washington DC. This makes them potentially useful for mobilizing resources and institutional support for different women's programs around the world. However, as my study of the other two sites of interaction has shown, it is precisely the embeddedness of women's programs in those two particular discursive centers that makes them irrelevant if not harmful in the eyes of Ukrainian women.

In sum, I have shown with the help of multi-sited dialogical discourse analysis that notions of civil society acquire their political meaning through interactions in particular contexts. First, this means that the mere employment of the notion of civil society does not necessarily create the projected social and political effects. Second, in a particular context the notion of civil society can come to mean something completely different and, thus, lead to the emergence of discourses and practices that contradict the (initial) notions of civil society and the women's agenda. I have further stressed that ideas and intentions do not exist in their pure form somewhere outside of the actual social and political world. Even if they did, there would be no way in which one could study them bypassing the actual instances in which ideas are put to practice. One can only judge their political value by looking at particular instances of their enactment. Ideas about why and how USAID should assist civil society in Ukraine cannot be understood without looking at how such assistance is actually conducted and made sense of in particular sites. The idea of assistance and the way it is put to practice are mutually constitutive and must be examined as such.

Appendix I: List of interviews [522]

Alekseenko, Maria, Information Coordinator, Ukrainian Women's Consortium, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003

Baziuk, Marta, Coordinator, Women's Economic Empowerment Program (WEE), Winrock International, telephone interview, August 10, 2004

Belushkina, Svitlana, Program Manager, Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), February 19, 2003

Biletska, Olga, Head of the Kharkiv Branch, International Organization "*Zhinocha Hromada*" (Women's Community), Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Black, David, Democracy and Governance Advisor, Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Unit, USAID, Washington DC (USA), August 9, 2004

Bodnarovska, Valentina, Director, International Humanitarian Center "*Rozhrada*", Kiev (Ukraine), April 1, 2003

Boichishin, Lubomyra, Director, Women's Information-Rehabilitation Center "*Lubomyra*", Kiev (Ukraine), April 2, 2003

Carothers, Thomas, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC (USA), August 6, 2004

Chala, Galina, member of staff, Kharkiv Charity Fund "Public Initiatives", Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Demidenko, Anton, Deputy Director, US-Ukraine Community Partnerships Project, Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Eisen, Samuel D., Democracy Programs, Office of the Coordinator for U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia, U.S. Department of State, Washington DC (USA), August 5, 2004

Fox, Katie, Deputy Director, Eurasia, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Washington DC (USA), August 9, 2004

Hansen, Gary, Chief, Civil Society Division, USAID, Washington DC (USA), August 5, 2004

Herman, Robert, Senior Associate, Management Systems International (MSI), Washington DC (USA), August 19, 2004

Gorovaya, Ludmila, Regional League of Business and Professional Women, Donetsk (Ukraine), April 20, 2005

Jay, Susan, Deputy Director, Africa Division, International Republican Institute (IRI), Washington DC (USA), August 4, 2004

Ivantcheva, Assia, Deputy Director, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005

[522] All interviews were conducted by the author; unless stated otherwise, positions and affiliations are current at the time of the interview. Transliteration of Ukrainian and Russian names is the one used by interviewees. Whenever English versions of the names were not available, the romanization table of the Library of Congress was used to transliterate them.

Kachanova, Natalia, director, Kharkiv Charity Fund "Public Initiatives", Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Kapeliushna, Olga, Program Coordinator, Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), April 03, 2003

Kapinus, Natalia, volunteer, Kharkiv Charity Fund "Public Initiatives", Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Karbowska, Natalka, Director, Ukrainian Women's Fund, Kiev (Ukraine), April 13, 2005

Khmyz, Tanya, Project Officer, Partnership for Reform in Ukraine, Freedom House, Kiev (Ukraine), February 3, 2003

Kim, Liliia, Director, Kharkov Women's City Fund, Kharkov (Ukraine), April 20, 2005

Kobelyanska, Larysa, Project Manager, UNDP Equal Opportunities Program, United Nations Development Program in Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), April 26, 2005

Kochemirovskaia, Olena, Director, Kharkov Region Organization "Youth Initiatives", formerly a coordinator at Kharkiv Center for Women's Studies, Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Kolesnyk, Artem, Information Coordinator, International Renaissance Foundation, Kharkov (Ukraine), April 4, 2003

Kolesnyk, Svitlana, Program Management Assistant, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005

Kopytko, Oleksii, Vise President, Association "Youth League", Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Kovtun, Olga, Kharkov City Public Organization "*Nadezhda*", Kharkov (Ukraine), April 20, 2005

Kropivianska, Olena, Trainer-consultant, Project "*Toloka*", Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), April 3, 2003

Kuchynska, Olga, Coordinator, Assistance in Further Strengthening Democratic Governance in Ukraine, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005

Kuharenko, Tetyana, Women's Programs Coordinator, International Renaissance Foundation, Kiev (Ukraine), April 4, 2003

Kulinich, Oleg, Head of the Committee for Family and Youth, Kharkiv Municipal Council, Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Levchenko, Kateryna, National Coordinator, Program Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Central and Eastern Europe, La Strada/ Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), February 19, 2003

Lyday, Corbin, formerly at WID/USAID, Washington DC (USA), August 20, 2004

Marchenko, Victoria, Media and Civil Society Programs, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005

Mruchkovska, Elvira, Coordinator, Crisis Prevention Program, Chernivtsi Local NGO "Women's Center", Chernivtsi (Ukraine), March 14, 2003

Myhaylyuk, Lesya, Assistant, Crisis Prevention Program, Chernivtsi Local NGO "Women's Center", Chernivtsi (Ukraine), March 14-15, 2003

Mykhalniuk, Taras, Coordinator, Regional Bureau for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Kiev (Ukraine), April 13, 2005

Nesterenko, Polina, Program Manager, Counterpart Creative Center, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003

Noè, Sascha, Program Officer Eastern Europe, N(o)VIB/ Oxfam Netherlands, the Hague (the Netherlands), April 15, 2002

Novakivska, Dzvinka, Information Coordinator, Eurasia Foundation, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003

Osovska, Olga, Director of the Center, Job Skills Training Coordinator, Chernivtsi Local NGO "Women's Center", Chernivtsi (Ukraine), March 14-15, 2003

Ovdienko, Inga, Information/ External Affairs Coordinator, Ukrainian Women's People Democratic Association "*Diya*", Kiev (Ukraine), April 1, 2003

Piñeiro Costas, Begoña, Anti-trafficking Project Officer, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Project Coordinator in Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), April 27, 2005

Pogrebinskiy, Mikhail, Director, Kiev Center of Political Studies and Conflictology**,** Kiev (Ukraine), February 3, 2003

Pojman, Ruth Freedom, Anti-trafficking Advisor, Europe and Eurasia Region, USAID, Washington DC (USA), August 16, 2004

Propp, Brian, Vice President, Counterpart International, Washington DC (USA), August 5, 2004

Puglisi, Rosaria, Political Affairs Officer, Political, Press and Information Section, European Union Delegation of the European Commission, Kiev (Ukraine), April 12, 2005

Rastrigina, Tatyana, Business Development Specialist, Office of Private Sector Development, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), February 18, 2003

Rosenberg, Ruth, Consultant, Trafficking in Persons, Gender and Development, Washington DC (USA), August 17, 2004

Rudenko, Tetyana, Assistant/ Information Coordinator, Trafficking Prevention Project, Winrock International/ Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), March 11, 2003

Samolevska, Natalka, Coordinator, Community Initiatives to Prevent Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Women (DOS), Winrock International/ Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), February 4, 2003

Savich, Liliia, Vise President, Educational Programs Coordinator, La Strada/ Ukraine, Kiev (Ukraine), February 19, 2003

Scott, Sheila, former (West) NIS-US Women's Consortium Coordinator, telephone interview, October 1, 2004

Shulga, Tetiana, Project Manager, Civil Society, European Union Delegation of the European Commission, Kiev (Ukraine), April 26, 2005

Suslova, Olena, Gender Activity Coordinator, Indiana University Parliamentary Development Project, USAID Democratic Parliamentary Strengthening Program, also head of Women's Information Consultative Centre, and a former coordinator of US-West NIS Women's Consortium, Kiev (Ukraine), April 11, 2005

Tarelin, Andriy, Program Director, Kharkiv Non-Governmental Center for Private Initiatives Assistance, Kharkov (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Tatarinova, Larisa, Program Director, Ukraine Citizen Action Network Program (UCAN), Kiev (Ukraine), April 28, 2005

Tisch, Sarah, Chief of Party, dot-Gov Program of the USAID dot-Com Initiative, Internews Network, former Coordinator, West NIS-US Women's Consortium, Winrock International, Washington DC (USA), August 23, 2004

Turner, Barbara, Deputy Assistance Administrator, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, USAID, Washington DC (USA), August 17, 2004

Tweed, Sarah, Coordinator, Trafficking Prevention Program in Ukraine (TPP) and Community Response to Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Women (DOS), Winrock International, telephone interview, August 6, 2004

Tymoshenko-Yakunina, Tatyana, Training Officer, Mission Gender Advisor, USAID Mission for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, Kiev (Ukraine), February 18, 2003, April 14, 2005

Usov, Anton, Research and External Affairs Coordinator, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Kiev (Ukraine), June-July, 2002

Vandenberg, Martina, former NIS-US Women's Consortium Coordinator, Winrock International, telephone interview, August 17, 2004

Wallin, Bob, Team Leader, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, USAID, Washington DC (USA), August 19, 2004

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Summary in Dutch

Verloren in vertaling – USAID steun aan democratievorming in post-communistisch Oekraïne

Het doel van dit proefschrift is om de aard en omvang te begrijpen van de impact van buitenlandse steun op de ontwikkeling en institutionalisering van de civil society (organisaties buiten de sfeer van de overheid waar mensen vrijwillig deel van uit maken). Meer specifiek kijk ik naar de Amerikaanse overheidssteun van het United States Agency for International Development (USAID) aan Oekraïnse vrouwenorganisaties in de periode van 1992 tot 2005.

Uit dit onderzoek blijkt dat buitenlandse steun een belangrijk raamwerk biedt voor samenwerking en partnerschap. Met name voor de ontwikkeling van de civil society, in casu de vrouwenorganisaties, is buitenlandse steun van belang. Dit proefschrift beschrijft de discursieve mechanismen die medebepalend zijn voor de aard en omvang van de impact van buitenlandse steun. Het onderzoek voegt de discursieve dimensie toe aan literatuur over buitenlandse steun. Begrip van discursieve mechanismen is cruciaal omdat, zoals ik laat zien, de hulpprogramma's vaak geen optimaal gebruik maken van de beschikbare menselijke, symbolische, en materiële bronnen. Gestelde doelen worden vaak niet gehaald. Aangezien buitenlandse steun uitgebreid wordt naar nieuwe landen en onderwerpen is het noodzakelijk om lessen te leren van moeilijkheden en fouten uit het verleden.

In dit onderzoek maak ik gebruik van dialogische discours analyse. Vanuit dit perspectief is de discursieve dimensie van politiek van even groot belang als haar materiële en institutionele dimensies. In feite zouden programma's, budgetten, en technische steun om de civil society van Oekraïne te ontwikkelen ondenkbaar zijn geweest zonder een voorafgaand idee dat de Amerikaanse overheid een rol te spelen heeft in de politieke transformatie van het voormalige Sovjet blok en zonder de idee dat daarvoor de civil society opgebouwd zou moeten worden. Dialogische discours analyse gaat er vanuit dat deze ideeën niet zomaar getransplanteerd kunnen worden van Washington DC naar Oekraïne. De ideeën worden tot leven gebracht en krijgen een nieuwe betekenis in de interacties tussen Amerikaanse beleidsmakers, hun Oekraïnse partners en de ontvangers van de hulp. In het proefschrift laat ik zien dat het bieden van steun faalt als de (her) interpretatie niet gebaseerd is op democratische principes. Ondemocraties vertalingen en (her) interpretaties verdiepen de kloof tussen de intenties van de buitenlandse hulpprogramma's en de lokale resultaten.

Het onderzoek laat zien dat ondanks het doel een robuuste, emanciperende, en duurzame civil society te bouwen, buitenlandse hulp heeft geleid tot de ontwikkeling van een civil society verre van dit ideaal. Lokale maatschappelijke organisaties worden gedomineerd door een elitistische en technocratische groep 'professionals zonder professie'. Het ontstaan van deze organisaties heeft geleid tot een reeks politiek problematische effecten: de organisaties worden gebruikt om private belangen in plaats van publieke belangen te dienen; zij versterken de elitistische en ondemocratische praktijken; en niet onbelangrijk, zij hebben de

betekenis van het politiek krachtige concept 'civil society' vertaald naar een gereedschapskist gevuld met technische hulpmiddelen. Dit leidt tot depolitisering het de idee van ontwikkeling van civil society voor democratisering, en tot depolitisering van vrouwenissues in Oekraïne. Ik concludeer dat de buitenlandse steun van USAID niet alleen de gestelde doelen niet haalt maar zelfs de ontwikkeling van een civil society verhindert omdat het 'hulp'-discours een ondemocratisch praktijk introduceert, of gebruikt wordt met ondemocratische doelen.

Ik laat zien dat de tegenstellingen tussen de democratische doelen en de ondemocratische aard van de activiteiten van de Oekraïnse organisaties verder gaan dan problemen in uitvoering. Het (onbedoelde) ondemocratische effect is endogeen aan het 'hulp'-discours en de 'hulp'-praktijken. Om tot een aanzienlijke verbetering van de hulp en assistentie te kunnen komen, moet het raamwerk waarbinnen 'hulp' gedefinieerd is herzien worden.

In het inleidende hoofdstuk 1 beschrijf ik de belangrijkste theoretische noties van dit proefschrift, zoals democratie, civil society, en buitenlandse steun. In paragraaf 1.2 bestudeer ik de normatieve en theoretische implicaties van het concept civil society op drie gerelateerde plaatsen van kennisproductie: ten eerste kijk ik naar theorieën die zijn ontwikkeld in Oost-Europa en de voormalige Sovjet Unie; ten tweede bestudeer ik ideeën over de civil society die ontstaan zijn in West-Europa en Noord-Amerika, en tot slot behandel ik theorieën over de transnationale of globale civil society waarin nieuwe ruimtes worden geconceptualiseerd die de grenzen van souvereine staten overschrijden. Deze discussies verduidelijken dat theoretische ideeën in specifieke omstandigheden ontwikkeld worden en binnen hun eigen context bestudeerd moeten worden. Met andere woorden: theoretici van het begrip civil society interpreteren het begrip niet altijd hetzelfde. In paragraaf 1.3 behandel ik de meer toegepaste theorieën van civil society, zoals theorieën over ontwikkelingshulp en democratisering. Die discussie laat zien dat ideeën niet neutraal zijn maar bijna één op één vertaald kunnen worden in politieke projecten in bepaalde landen die impact hebben op politieke en sociaal-economische ontwikkelingen.

In hoofdstuk 2 verken ik civil society als een empirisch fenomeen. Ik bekijk de verschillende vormen van maatschappelijk activisme in Oekraïne voor en na 1989. Hoofdstuk 3 is gewijd aan de methodologische benadering in dit proefschrift. Ik laat zien hoe de theoretische en empirische puzzels uit de voorgaande hoofdstukken opgehelderd worden met een dialogische discours analyse gebaseerd op het werk van de Russische/Sovjet denker Mikhail Bakhtin. Met behulp van deze benadering kan mijn casusonderzoek verdeeld worden in drie gerelateerde lokaties van interactie: Washington DC, Kiev en de lokale niet-gouvernementele organisaties. Hoofdstukken 4, 5 en 6 omvatten respectievelijk voor ieder van deze lokaties de empirische bevindingen. In hoofdstuk 7 vergelijk ik de drie lokaties en bediscussieer ik de stabiliteit en transformaties van het civil society 'hulp' discours. Ik verhelder ook de sociale en politieke effecten van de buitenlandse hulp in Oekraïne. Tot slot kom ik terug op enkele theoretische overwegingen.

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